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Present day theology

William D. McDowell

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Present Day Theology

BY
WASHINGTON GLADDEN

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By
WASHINGTON GLADDEN

TO MY
FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS IN COLUMBUS
AMONG WHOM I HAVE LIVED
FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS,
AND WHOSE WELFARE AND HAPPINESS
ARE VERY DEAR TO ME,
THESE PAGES ARE LOVINGLY INSCRIBED.

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PREFACE

THESE lectures took the place of the regular Mid-week Service in our church, beginning early in January, 1913. The first lecture was given in the Chapel, but its capacity was taxed, and the remaining lectures were heard by audiences which comfortably filled our church auditorium. Such an attendance, on a week-day evening, is an indication that people are not averse to theological discussion. I am sure that no scientific, literary, or sociological themes which I could have offered, would have drawn half so large an audience.

This ground has been gone over more than once, in this pulpit; two volumes, — "Burning Questions," and "How Much is Left of the Old Doctrines?" — are both made up of Sunday evening lectures on theological questions, and it was therefore somewhat difficult to find fresh material; but circumstances seemed to warrant a re-statement of the central truths of our religion, and it was gratifying to see that they have not lost their hold on the human heart.

The lectures were, of course, intended for our own congregation, but as many of the other churches were closed, a large number of the members of other congregations were present at most of them. The interest manifested by these has led to this publication.

The book is printed and published in Columbus, and I hope that it may be accepted as an offering of the best I have to give, to the people of my own city. It is truth which has been tested, and which has been found good to live by. It is not, however, a local gospel; it will prove just as true at any other latitude and longitude.

When a thing has been said by others better than I can say it, I feel that those to whom I speak are entitled to hear it. It has always been my custom, therefore, to quote freely, giving due credit. In this way I acknowledge my indebtedness to those who have helped me, and sometimes, I hope, do a service to my hearers and my readers, by introducing to them my friends.

W. G.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
COLUMBUS, O., MAY 6, 1913.

CONTENTS.

I.

INTRODUCTORY	1
------------------------	---

II.

GOD AND MAN	21
-----------------------	----

III.

NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL	41
---------------------------------------	----

IV.

SIN AND SALVATION	63
-----------------------------	----

V.

HEAVEN AND HELL	91
---------------------------	----

VI.

THE INCARNATION	121
---------------------------	-----

VII.

THE ATONEMENT	147
-------------------------	-----

VIII.

FORGIVENESS	175
-----------------------	-----

IX.

THE LIFE EVERLASTING	199
--------------------------------	-----

I.
INTRODUCTORY.
(1)

"Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect
He could not, what he knows now, know at first;
What he considers that he knows to-day,
Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown,
Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
Because he lives, which is to be a man,
Set to instruct himself by his past self;
First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,
Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,
Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law."

ROBERT BROWNING.

PRESENT DAY THEOLOGY.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

OUR preachers in past generations, were in the habit of preaching courses of doctrinal sermons quite frequently, going over the same ground again and again, and trying to get their people, as they used to say, "thoroughly indoctrinated." It was a rational thing to do; it resulted in generations of strong men and women who had ideas and could stand for them; who had convictions and could fight for them. Those doctrinal sermons represented the freshest and best thought of their day; it was in harmony with such knowledge of the universe and its laws as they had. It is not the thought of this day, and it is not in harmony with our knowledge; but it was the thought of that day, and it gave direction to study, and motive to choice, and vigor to conduct.

This generation needs to have the highest and best thought of the day, on these great themes of the religious life, presented with the same clearness and the same fullness and the same frequency.

When these subjects are presented in the form in which they were presented fifty years ago they fail to produce conviction in the minds of men; they cannot be

believed. In many pulpits they are so presented; and although those who receive their instruction sometimes accept it, because their fathers and mothers accepted it, and because nothing better has been offered them, it is apt to result in spiritual tragedies when those who have been misled by it find their way out into other associations and come in contact with the larger knowledge of which they have been kept in ignorance.

Painful cases often come under my notice of young men and women who have received their religious education in churches where the old ideas are still enforced, with no modification, and who have found themselves confounded and bewildered by the utter impossibility of reconciling these ideas with other demonstrated truths of which they have been put in full possession. In my service as preacher in the universities I have been astounded by the kind of questions that have been put to me by students, supposed to be well educated, who have always been church-goers, in intelligent communities, but who are still stumbling over conceptions of religious truth which it has been impossible for any intelligent teacher to hold for a quarter of a century. These young men were in deep trouble; they saw that these things could not be true, yet they did not dare to let them go; they were afraid to go back and confess to parents and pastors that they have changed their views on these questions. They evidently expected to be treated as apostates. The impulse was to dismiss the whole matter from their minds. The agnosticism which we find in many colleges and universities is thus naturally accounted for.

What right has any minister of the Gospel to send out young men and women from his church into the world in such a benighted condition, liable to be wrecked in their religious thinking, as soon as they come in contact with the living and constructive thought of their generation? If he is so stupid or so ignorant or so indolent or so cowardly that he cannot find out and deliver the truth that God is revealing to the world today, let him get out of the pulpit. A coal mine would furnish him a more fitting environment, and a far more useful occupation.

The indignation which is always kindled in me at finding these souls in this forlorn and helpless plight, with no clear and solid convictions of religious truth, no light to guide them that the first breath of modern thought will not blow out, is part of my reason for taking up these truths at this time. I do not want the young men and women who go out from this church to be exposed to such perils. I want them to get conceptions of religious truth which they can anchor to and build upon. I want them to know that they have a faith and that it has foundations. I want them to get such a grip on the great facts of the Gospel as shall give them conviction, courage, vigor, an all-conquering faith. The Christian truth *of this day* is able to make the men and women of this day strong, brave, happy Christians; but they must get hold of it, and understand it and make it their own. And this means that it must be taught frankly and explicitly and with all needful iteration. One of the wisest and strongest of our modern Christian teachers, President King, emphasizes and

illustrates this fact, that the teacher must not be afraid of the repetition which shall fix the truth in the minds of those whom he is instructing. I trust, therefore, that though these themes have been gone over more than once in this place you will not find the repetition irksome. The subjects we are dealing with are so large and so many-sided, that we ought to find new significance in them at every approach.

I am to speak upon Present Day Theology. It ought to be said that the phrase cannot be narrowly defined. There is no synod or council or general assembly which is authorized to formulate its beliefs; there are no creeds which set forth its affirmations. Its content must be gathered from many sources—from books, sermons, addresses, articles in reviews—from the current discussions of theological questions. Many different kinds of notions and theories would claim the name of present day theology, and there is no copyright or trade-mark which entitles any of them to denounce the others as spurious. But, for that matter, the same may be said of the old theology; there are wide diversities among those who claim to teach the only true and genuine orthodoxy. I shall, therefore, only try to give you, as well as I can, out of a pretty full acquaintance with current religious thought, the ideas which thoughtful and intelligent men—men well accredited in all the leading denominations—are now accepting.¹ The idea of the immanence of God;² the idea that God's method of creation is the method of evolution;³ the idea that nature in all its deepest meanings is supernatural;⁴ the idea of the constant presence of God in our lives;⁵ the idea of the universal

divine Fatherhood and of the universal human Brotherhood, with all that they imply, — these are ideas which are here to stay. They involve, as President King has shown us in the book which bears this title, a “Reconstruction of Theology.” That reconstruction is going on, and it is a movement of vast importance.

To name a few of the leaders in it in this country may be suggestive. First and greatest among them is the name of one no longer with us, Bishop Phillips Brooks; after him come men like Dean Hodges and Professor Nash of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge; President Hyde of Bowdoin College, President Harris, recently of Amherst; President Tucker of Dartmouth; President King of Oberlin; the two Professors Moore of Cambridge; Professors Evans and Fitch of Andover; Dean Charles R. Brown of New Haven; the late Professor Borden P. Bowne of Boston University, the greatest thinker among the Methodists; the two Professors Brown and Professor Hugh Black of the Union Theological Seminary, and Professor William Newton Clarke, the most eminent of Baptist Theologians, who has lately gone to his rest. I am naming only a few representatives out of many, in positions of leadership and responsibility as religious teachers in some of the greater denominations; I am not speaking of the hundreds of preachers and teachers and editors and authors who are bearing their testimony in manifold ways. These are voices that are not likely to be silenced; the truth they are telling is mighty and it will prevail. The day of apology and defence for the present day theology has gone by; the day has come when it should be preached

Wm Adams, Br

with conviction and enthusiasm as truth which is worthy of all acceptance.

The present day theology, then, is simply the explanation which men are giving of religious truth in the light of this century. Increasing knowledge of the world, and of ourselves and of the Bible calls for new explanations of the facts of religion. New light is always breaking forth; we see these great themes in the new light and discover that our former theories of them need to be reshaped. This has been true in all the ages of the world, and it will always be true. God is always making all things new in the order of nature, and, therefore, in the world of theory old things are passing away and all things are becoming new.

The principal facts of religion do not change. All the subjects of which we shall speak in this course of lectures have been subjects of thought from time immemorial: God and Man, Nature and the Supernatural, Sin and Salvation, Heaven and Hell — these are not new words, nor are the facts which they connote new facts. But we see all of them in a different light from that in which the wisest men were looking at them even fifty years ago; when we put into words our best thought about them, these words will convey a different meaning from that which the best men found in them fifty years ago — a larger meaning, to our minds a more convincing meaning, because more in harmony with all the rest of the truth we know.

The facts of astronomy have not greatly changed within the past six hundred years. Though a few heavenly bodies have disappeared, the face of the

heavens has not perceptibly altered. But our knowledge of the facts of astronomy and our explanation of its phenomena and forces have mightily changed during this period. In the first place we have evidence of the existence of vast numbers of these heavenly bodies which were not known to the men of Ptolemy's time; perhaps our heavens are a thousand times more extended and more populous with worlds than were theirs. In the second place our whole account of the constitution and the motions of these heavenly bodies is radically different from theirs. The sun and the moon and the stars gave them the same light they give us; for the practical purposes of life the heavens were to the earth in their day not very different from what they are in our day, but the explanations which they gave of them are very different from the explanations which we give.

Much the same might be said of the facts of geography and of geology, and of physics, and of chemistry, and of physiology, and even of history. The facts of most of these sciences have not greatly changed but our knowledge of the facts has been wonderfully enlarged, and our way of accounting for them has been greatly changed.

The same thing is true of the facts of religious knowledge and of the religious life. We have the same essential verities to deal with that Augustine and Luther and Calvin and Wesley had, only these facts have been marvelously multiplied and extended; the universe in which we live is a vastly greater universe than that of which they knew, and we are compelled by our enlarging knowledge of God and man, of nature and

the supernatural, to give very different explanations of the things we know than those which sufficed for them.

Consider, for a moment, how our ideas of time have been extended, and what an immense range our thought has been given over the history of the race. The men who framed the creeds by which we have been trying to live for the past three hundred years supposed that the entire physical universe came into being not more than six thousand years ago; that no longer ago than that the earth, the sun, the moon, and all the hosts of heaven were created out of nothing within six days of twenty-four hours each. But during the past century men have been studying the crust of the earth, observing the manner in which mountains are builded and water courses are carved out, tracing the movements of glacial masses, watching the coral insects at their tasks, reading the record written upon the rocks, and they now know by a knowledge that is as sure as any they possess that this earth is millions of years of age. How much older is the sun and the other host, of

"The numerable-innumerable
Sun, sun and sun, through finite-infinite space,
In finite-infinite time,"

no man can pretend to know. It may be, as Sir Alfred Russell Wallace has taught, that ours is the only sphere of all these millions on millions that is inhabited; though that is a negative which it would be hard to prove. But this globe of ours has been inhabited, we know, for a long period. Here, again, our data are incomplete; we only know that the old idea that the

creation of man took place about 4,000 years before Christ was born is altogether inadequate; very conservative scholars think that he must have been here at least thirty thousand years; some of them would multiply that figure by seven or ten. At all events we are sure that tool-using men have been at work upon this planet for a long, long day, and the conception of the vast multitudes that lived and perished here before the dawn of history, ages on ages before Abraham was, or any sign of the religion which we profess had appeared upon the earth, presents to us a serious problem for faith. What became of these unknown ancestors of ours? "We have to reckon," says Dr. Gordon, "with the stupendous problem which history thus extended presents to Christian faith. The only possible solution is that which sees in the evolutionary process the redemptive movements of God. If one believes in a Christian God one must find a Christian interpretation of human history. It is impossible, without self-stultification, to consider the question of salvation only from the modern point of view, or to rest content when the process is followed back into the civilization of Israel. We have a pre-Hebrew, a prehistoric world of unimaginable extent and impressiveness to confront, a world beside whose population the inhabitants of the entire historic period are but as a drop to the ocean."

These are facts which were wholly unknown to the men who fashioned our traditional creeds, and the discovery of them is sure to call for some reshaping of long-accepted theories about God and man.

All that I have been saying involves, of course,

evolution as the method of creation. This is a fact from which no intelligent person can get away: it has revolutionized science and philosophy; it must be reckoned with in all our theological explanations. Only we must not make a god of evolution, as too many people do. You often hear men talking about it as if it were a deity that had pushed God from his throne and supplanted him. People say that evolution has done this and evolution that, as though evolution were an omnipotent power, and not simply a method by which God has created the worlds and is bringing forth order and beauty. The more sure we are that things have come to be what they are through slow and gradual changes, extending over vast periods, the greater is our need of a directing intelligence to guide the entire process from its dateless beginning to the far off divine event. "Not only," says President King, of Oberlin, "is the religious interest not opposed to the scientific interest; in one important particular it is identical with it. For its own sake, theology can remain satisfied no longer with the old, inconsistent view of a virtual independence of the world in the larger part of it, and of direct dependence on God at certain points only, where we cannot yet trace the process of God's working. It is quite unwilling to say God is only where we cannot understand him. It is quite unwilling to admit that increasing knowledge of God's working is increasing elimination of him from the universe. It is quite unwilling to take its stand on gaps or base its arguments for God on ignorance. It believes in *God*—in a God upon whom the whole universe, in every least

atom of it, and in every humblest spirit of it, is absolutely dependent. Of that dependence it is certain, and no study of the *method* of it can make it less certain.”*

This brings us to the doctrine of the immanence of God which is the one ruling conception in present day theology. The fact that God is in nature, and in human nature, filling it all with his fullness, working out his great designs; that all the natural forces are only methods of his working; that all these are parts of his ways; that history reveals him; that what we call progress is only the carrying forward of his eternal purpose; that all the good deeds and the loving services of men are the signs of his presence; that there is, therefore, more of God in the world today than there ever was before; that he is nearer to the thought and life of men than he ever was before; that we have not to go back to past ages to gather proofs of his existence and indications of his purpose, but have only to look and listen that we may see and hear him, — that we may receive his word and walk in his light and share his peace; the doctrine of a present God, of an ever-living God, of a ministering, guiding, inspiring, comforting, healing, helping God, — this is the doctrine which men are beginning to understand and to lay hold upon. This is the truth which underlies Christian Science, albeit it is mingled in that system with many exaggerations and perversions and moral confusions; this is the truth which has given wings to much of what is known as the New Thought, to conceptions of our relation to the spiritual world and the infinite Power which are taking a strong

* “Reconstruction in Theology,” p. 89.

held on the minds of millions of men and women in this generation. It is the realization of the presence of God in our lives — of what Dr. Clarke calls the "Friendship of the Spirit." It is nothing new; it is all in the Twenty-third Psalm and the One Hundred and Twenty-first Psalm, and the One Hundred and Thirty-ninth Psalm; it is all in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Gospel of John, and the First Epistle of John, and in the Second Chapter of First Corinthians and in every other utterance of a deep and vital religious experience which the Bible contains. But it stands in a very different relation to the religious thought of this time from that which it occupied in a past generation, and it makes necessary some important changes in theological theories.

The immanence of God is the central truth of the present day theology. But it must not be so stated as to contradict human freedom, or to identify God with law. He is in the whole world, in all the life of man; but he is also over it all. He is working in us, but he is not coercing us; he is leaving us free to choose the evil and the good. His working in us never overbears our choices, for it is only the good which we freely choose which makes character, and the one thing which he wants in this universe is good character, sound and complete personalities. He is helping us all he can without undermining manhood; no more.

One other element of great importance enters into the problem before us. We are all enveloped in and more or less possessed by a social consciousness, which is the product of human experience, under the guidance of the ever present divine influence. We are very fond of

that beautiful Psalm, "The Lord is My Shepherd," and we always give it a personal reference: "*My Shepherd.*" This is a precious faith, but it would be well for us to remember that the Good Shepherd is leading a flock; that though he may know by name the individual sheep, his care is for the whole flock, and *the flock is the human race. He is leading Humanity into the green pastures and beside the still waters.* That is the meaning of history. He has not yet brought us through all our perils, but his wisdom and his patience and his care do not fail. And this means that by the good discipline of natural law, and by his faithful providence, and by the monitions of his Spirit he is gradually leading his children into a better understanding of his relation to the world and to them, and of their relation to one another and to him. If God is leading Humanity, by his Spirit, as the shepherd leads his flock, then the thoughts of men must be widened with the process of the suns; what we call the social consciousness must slowly but surely change from generation to generation, and out of that purified social consciousness must come better thoughts about God, and better explanations of religious truth, a new theology, a theology renewed and enlarged from age to age. I do not see how any man who believes in a living and present God, a God who is dwelling among his people and educating them by his Spirit, can help seeing that theology, which is simply men's explanation of God's relation to them and to the world, *must continually change, as their education progresses,* and as they get clearer and more adequate ideas about Him. The notion that theology can be tied up to one

set of formulas; that the explanations of religious truth which were made one hundred years ago or three hundred years ago or fifteen hundred years ago are complete and sufficient, needing no revision and no enlargement, seems to me a flat and flagrant and even contemptuous denial of the one sublime and vital truth of religion. — the fact of God's constant presence in the world and of the leadership of his Spirit in our study of his truth.

Let us see, for a moment, what are the elements of that social consciousness which represents the highest thought of the present age. President King of Oberlin has given us a most profound discussion of this subject, in his book entitled "Theology and the Social Consciousness." "The simplest," he says, "and probably the most accurate single expression we can give to the social consciousness is to say that it is *a growing sense of the real brotherhood of men*. But five elements seem plainly involved in this, and may be profitably separated in our thought if it is to be clear and definite—a deepening sense (1) *of the likeness or likemindedness of men*; (2) *of their mutual influence*; (3) *of the value and sacredness of the person*; (4) *of mutual obligation*, and (5) *of love*."

We shall all admit that these elements are all here, in the prevailing thought of the time.

This age differs from the ages which have preceded it in the recognition, first, of the essential likeness of men; of the fact that beneath all the differences of condition and of endowment, men are just men; that although a man may lack culture and wealth and titles and rank, "a man's a man for a' that." President King

quotes from Howell's "A Boy's Town," these true words: "The first thing you have to learn here below, is that in essentials you are just like every one else, and that you are different from others only in what is not so much worth while."

The second truth which we are coming to see is that of mutual influence; that no man liveth unto himself; that we cannot reach perfection or blessedness except as we share in the life of our fellows.

The third is the sacredness of personality; "the steadily deepening sense that every person has a value not to be measured in anything else and is in himself sacred to God and to man."

The fourth is the growing sense of obligation, our duty to help and minister and cooperate.

The fifth is that the great debt which we owe to our fellows is love, — the giving of ourselves for them.

If now it be true that such is the *social consciousness of this age*, — that thoughts like these tend more and more to envelope our minds and take possession of them; if the mental atmosphere in which we live and move is full of such ideas as these, — then it is perfectly certain that our theological conceptions will feel their influence. Our thoughts about God will be modified by these ideas; our explanations of his relations to us will be affected by them.

If men are essentially alike, it must be because God has made them so, and that old theory of his arbitrary decrees, of his partial and wilful selection of some to be blessed and some to be banned, will have to be given up. That theory of foreordination could never have sprung

out of a social consciousness like that which now prevails.

Then, again, that idea of the mutual influence of men; that we are members one of another; that we share one another's woes and burdens, that no man can go to heaven alone, — must radically modify all our conceptions of atonement and redemption. We shall be compelled to abandon the old notion of legal equivalents and substitutions and to bring the whole matter into the ethical or spiritual realm.

I cannot stay to illustrate further these effects of the social consciousness upon our theological theories; other phases of this subject will come to light in the lectures which follow. I only desire to fix your thought at this time upon this great truth, that the shepherding love of the divine Spirit must be leading mankind into clearer light and larger life, and that therefore theology which is man's explanation of God and his kingdom must be constantly changing for the better.

You may say that the theology is given once for all in the Bible. I do not admit the truth of this, but if it were true, the case would not be altered in the least; because man's interpretation of the Bible must change as man's spiritual vision is enlarged and purified. What a man gets out of the Bible depends on the man himself. Cotton Mather, reflecting the Christian consciousness of his day, gets one thing out of it; Phillips Brooks, reflecting the Christian consciousness of his day gets another and a very different thing.

If you say that Christ is the revelation of the truth, the same argument applies; for our interpretation of

Christ changes equally with enlarging vision. It has taken long ages of the schooling of the Spirit to bring men into a moral and spiritual condition in which they could understand and interpret Christ. "The old Pagan mind," says Fairbairn, "into which Christianity first came, could not possibly be the best interpreter of Christianity, and the more the mind is cleansed of the pagan, the more qualified it becomes to understand this religion. It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that the later forms of truth should be the truer and purer."

I trust I have made it clear what the present day theology is. (It is the explanation given by the Christian consciousness of this time of the truths of Christianity.) And I hope it is very plain that as the Christian consciousness under the leadership and tuition of the Spirit of all truth must be constantly clarified and invigorated, new statements must continually be made of the truths of the Christian religion.

Not only therefore is there nothing rash or revolutionary in the assumption that there ought to be, for this new time, a new theology, the rational and reverent mind should be looking for such a restatement and should be ready to receive it. It is precisely as reasonable to expect it as it is to expect new leaves upon the trees in the springtime. The contrary assumption is precisely as irrational as would be the claim that the plant life which sprung from the earth in the spring of the year 1500 is good enough for today.

It is true that in all development there are constant elements, and these must be held fast. Great care is needed lest in pruning away the dead wood we sacrifice

vital and fruitful branches. A wise conservation must always be united with a courageous radicalism. Yet the great first truth of all Christian experience is the truth of the constant presence of the divine Spirit in the world, not only brooding over the earth, as in the morning of the creation, and constantly renewing the face of the ground, but also shepherding, guiding, teaching his children, renewing them in the spirit of their minds, giving them larger and truer thoughts, leading them into a better understanding of his works and ways. The theology which is the product of such leadership must be constantly advancing. If we live in the Spirit, says Paul, we must *walk* in the Spirit. We cannot stand still in our thinking; we must be going on. The scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven must be willing to work with God in the ways of service and to walk with him in the paths of light.

II.
GOD AND MAN.

(21)

"The riddle of the world is understood
Only by him who feels that God is good,
As only he can feel who makes his love
The ladder of his faith, and climbs above
On the rounds of his best instincts; draws no line
Between mere human goodness and divine,
But, judging God by what in him is best,
With a child's trust, leans on a Father's breast."

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

II.

GOD AND MAN.

WE are to speak tonight of God and Man, the two great terms of theology and religion. Each of these terms has been immeasurably expanded in the progress of thought. The history of man upon the earth, as we saw in the last lecture, has been given a tremendous extension. Humanity, as we now know, has descended from an antiquity so dim and remote that its records fade utterly from our vision; we only know that we are kindred to uncounted billions who have inhabited this planet, whose manner of life we cannot imagine, into whose consciousness we cannot enter, whose discipline and whose destiny is to us unknown. In like manner the explorations of science have given to our thoughts of God an almost indefinite enlargement. The author of such a Universe as that in which we live, whose thought is the norm of all its laws, and whose life is the life of all its tribes, is a Being before whom our souls are humbled because of the greatness of his power, and the wonders of his wisdom. The mystery of God outreaches our logic and our imagination, and the mystery of man is scarcely less sublime. Indeed, as Tennyson has told us, the flower in the crannied wall holds secrets that baffle our science, and Edwin Markham puts a very pertinent question in these lines:

"Scoffer, you cry, 'Where is your other world,
Your fabled heaven in far eternities?'
Well said: but first, before your lip is curled,
Tell, ('tis a little thing) where this world is!"

The man who can accurately locate this planet in the universe, and give its true relation to the hosts of heaven has knowledge not shared by most of his fellows.

It is not, however, of these deeper mysteries of being that we are to speak tonight. Some things are assumed in all our arguments: we assume tonight the being of God and of man; we do not undertake to solve the problems connected with the nature of the Creator, or with the origin or history of the creature. It is with the relation between the two that we are now concerned.

Their relation has been variously conceived in the succeeding ages of human development. There was a period, far back in the mists of antiquity, when men were in the habit of regarding all the unseen powers of whom they had some conception as their enemies. The ills which they suffered they attributed to their deities; to outwit or to baffle or to placate malign forces was the larger part of religion. We find this stage of religion now existing among the more backward tribes. "Savages," says Sir John Lubbock, "almost always regard spirits as evil beings. We can, I think, easily understand why this should be. Amongst the very lowest races every other man, — amongst those slightly more advanced, every man of a different tribe — is regarded as naturally and almost necessarily hostile. A stranger is synonymous with an enemy, and a spirit is but a member of an invisible tribe.

"The Hottentots, according to Thunberg, have very vague ideas about a good deity. They have much clearer notions about an evil spirit whom they fear, believing him to be the occasion of sickness, death, thunder and every calamity that befalls them. The Bechuanas attribute all evil to an invisible god, whom they call Murino.

"The West Coast negroes, according to Artus, represent their deities as black and mischievous, delighting to torment them in various ways. They said the European's God was very good who gave them such blessings and treated them like his children. Others asked, murmuring, why God was not as kind to them, why he did not supply them with woollen and linen cloth, iron, brass, and such things, as well as the Dutch? The Dutch answered that God had not neglected them since he had sent them gold, palm wine, fruits, corn, oxen, goats, hens and many other things necessary to life, as tokens of his bounty. But there was no persuading them that these things came from God. . . .

"When Burton spoke to the Eastern negroes about the Deity they eagerly asked where he was to be found in order that they might kill him; for, they said, who but he lays waste our homes, and kills our wives and cattle?"*

Browning's Caliban on Setebos gives us this theology in its next stage of development, when the conception is a little refined, and God is supposed to be possessed of great power which he uses capriciously. So this uncanny savage Caliban lies splashing "in the cool

* "Origin of Civilization," Chap. IV.

slush," looking away to the sea and musing about the deity of whom his dam has taught him.

"Setebos, Setebos and Setebos!

Thinketh he dwelleth in the cold of the moon.
Thinketh he made it, with the sun to match,
But not the stars, the stars came otherwise,
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that,
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea, which rounds and ends the same.

* * *

Thinketh he made thereat the sun, the isle,
Men and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
By moonlight: and the pie with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants: the ants themselves
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite; how else?
He could not Himself, make a second self
To be his mate; as well have made Himself;
He would, not make what he mislikes or slights,
An eye-sore to him, or not worth his pains;
But did, in envy, listlessness or sport
Make what himself would fain in a manner be,—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
Things he admires and mocks, too—that is it.

* * *

Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay;

Would I not take clay, pinch my Caliban
Able to fly,—for, there, see, he hath wings,
And great comb, like the hoopoe's to admire,
And there, a sting to do his foes offense.
There and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, rip me off the horns
Of grigs high up that make the merry din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
And he lay stupid-like—why, I should laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else
Not take my fancy; I might hear his cry,
And give the manikin three sound legs for one,
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,
Making and marring clay at will? So He!"

Traces—survivals, perhaps we may call them—of this natural theology of Caliban which deifies a capricious power and worships it with a sort of slavish fear, may be found in conceptions of God that are not yet very old.

Out of this arises the larger and higher conception of God as a moral ruler, whose nature is holy and whose law is righteous, who governs the world in the interests of justice and purity and truth, who is capable of affection toward his obedient creatures,—whose deepest motive, perhaps, is love, but whose *primary relation to men is that of a Ruler, a Sovereign*. This is the constructive idea by which our Reformed theology has been built for

the last three hundred years. Its ruling conceptions have been political or forensic. In trying to explain the relation of God to men, it has depended mostly on governmental analogies. What God would or would not do for man was determined, primarily, by governmental considerations. His personal feelings, if we may so speak, were subordinated to his obligations to preserve and maintain a righteous government. And man's approach to him must always be through the legal provisions made for the maintenance of the honor of his government.

This is true of the Calvinistic system, and of the systems affiliated with it, and it is not less true of the Arminian theory; for though the Arminians made more account of benevolent motives in the divine government than the Calvinists did, the governmental relation was after all the dominant one. The Calvinist, says Fairbairn, held the sovereignty to be absolute and irresponsible, and the Arminian held it to be tempered by benevolence, but to both *the government of God was the primary concern*. Calvin maintained that the will of God—his mere good pleasure—was the source of it all; that you must not look behind that will for any sort of motive. No injustice can be imputed to him, *because his will makes justice*. If he elects some it is not that they merit anything; if he reprobates others, it is not because they particularly deserve it, it is because he chooses to do it. He is free from blame in all this, says Calvin, like a creditor who has the power to remit his claim against one debtor and to enforce it against another. As Caliban would say:

"Thinketh such shows nor right nor wrong in him,
Nor hard nor cruel: He is strong and lord.
Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea:
Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
Say the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file one pincer twisted off;
Say this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red.
As it likes me, each time, I do; so He."

This absolute arbitrariness was much modified by the later Calvinists, and the Arminians; motives of benevolence were supposed to control the divine government; it was believed to be a moral government, but the principles on which it was administered were such as control the administration of human government. As Fairbairn says, after an analysis of the idea of Sovereignty, Arminian as well as Calvinistic, prevailing after the Reformation: "Theories of the divine Sovereignty had the strictest relation to ancient theories as to the forms of government, or the duties and rights of citizens, and the grounds and limits of the legal power. This means that to the forensic theologian as was the state, such was the universe and the reign of God."

Now, so far as the relations of God and man are concerned, what has happened to the old theology, what has transformed it into the new theology is simply this, that the ruling conception of God as Sovereign, Ruler, Moral Governor, has been exchanged for the ruling conception of God as Father. This does not mean that the real sovereignty or rulership of God has been denied,

but that it is no longer the primary idea in our personal relation with God. Sovereignty was the fundamental idea of the old theology; it admitted as much Fatherhood in it as could be reconciled with absolute sovereignty; no more. Fatherhood is the fundamental idea of the new theology; and the sovereignty has to be interpreted through the Fatherhood. The theology which says, first of all, God is Ruler and man is subject, is the old theology; the theology which says, first of all, God is Father and man is his child, is the new theology.

Dr. Fairbairn, in his volume on "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology," quotes from a volume of Dr. Candlish, the distinguished Scotch theologian, a clear and consistent statement of the old theology, which made sovereignty central and primary. Let me cite Fairbairn's resume of Candlish:

1. "'God's *fundamental and primary*' relation to man was that of Creator and Governor; 'His rule and government must be in the proper forensic sense legal and judicial;' 'absolute and sovereign;' 'of the most thoroughly royal, imperial, autocratic kind.'" To conceive it as anything else were 'an inconsistency, an intolerable anomaly, a suicidal self-contradiction.'

"2. [Jesus Christ is] *the only historical Person who was really and by nature the Son of God.*

"3. The only other sons of God were *the elect in Christ*, who became *by adoption* partakers in the Sonship of the Only Begotten. *Beyond these limits there was no Fatherhood, only sovereignty.*" *

* Op. cit. p. 432.

The idea was that the sin of Adam canceled the fact of fatherhood; that Adam and all his descendants ceased to be the sons of God and became the subjects of his government, justly exposed to the penalties of disobeyed law. Provision was made, however, in the atonement, for restoration to the filial condition of these alienated subjects; and all who accepted Christ as their substitute and received his saving grace were adopted into the family of God; to them he became once more a Father and they were acknowledged as his children; but all the rest who failed to avail themselves of this provision were aliens and strangers, subjects of his law, indeed, but in no wise sharers of his parental love.

This is the conception which is fundamental in the theology which was taught in all our Evangelical churches when some of us were young, and which is still taught in a great many churches. But there are now not a few of the leading churches of all denominations in which it is no longer taught; in which it has either been explicitly abandoned or implicitly supplanted by other conceptions.

There are two main reasons for this change. The first is that a fuller study of the words of Jesus Christ make it plain that this doctrine utterly misrepresents his teaching respecting men's relation to God; and the second is that the social consciousness of this generation finds it impossible to entertain such an idea of God as this theory implies. That the Creator of the universe should hold such a relation as this toward the thousands of millions of sentient creatures for whose existence he is responsible, excluding them from their birth from his

fatherly love and care, counting them as subjects, not sons, and as aliens and enemies until their broken legal relation to his kingdom has been repaired — a fracture in which they had no part whatever — is, to the moral sense of enlightened humanity in this generation a proposition utterly unbelievable.

More and more clear it has become as men have reflected upon the relation between themselves and God that the teachings of Jesus respecting the universal Fatherhood of God must be true; that the parable of the Prodigal Son must give us the right view of God's relation to all his children; that there are and can be no legal or political or governmental barriers shutting any human being out of God's fatherly love; that the fact of Fatherhood cannot be canceled by the disobedience of the child; that the true father never disowns his children because of their unworthiness, but always counts them as his, even when they are in the far country, and always keeps the door unlatched and the light in the window waiting for their return.

In short, it has become increasingly clear to reverent and earnest men that the central relation of God to men must be an ethical or a spiritual, rather than a political relation. The great fact about him which we most need to know is not that he is our Ruler or Governor, but that he is our Father. To put the legal or forensic fact first, and make the parental and filial relation a possibility only, is to profane all our thoughts of God.

All attempts to explain the relation of God to man in governmental terms are therefore inadequate and misleading. They obscure the great fact; they do not get

at the heart of the matter at all. "Spiritual and personal relations," says Fairbairn, "which have their causes and ends in spiritual and personal needs, cannot be stated *in the terms of physical creation or political institution, but only in those of the heart and the life.*"* That is the fact which the new theology has discovered and on which it has builded. Fairbairn is right when he goes on to say, that Jesus "makes the Fatherhood the basis of all the duties which man owes to God. Supreme love to God is possible only because God is love. On the ground of mere sovereignty or judicial and autocratic authority the first commandment could never be enjoined. We cannot love simply because we will or wish or are commanded, but only because we *are loved*. Supreme affection is possible only through the sovereign Fatherhood. And what is true of this first is true of all our other duties. Worship is to be in spirit and in truth because it is worship of the Father. Prayer is to be constant and simple and sincere because it is offered to the Father. We are to give alms in simplicity and without ostentation because the Father sees in secret. We are to be forgiving, because the Father forgives. Obedience is imitation of God, a being perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. In a word, duty is but the habit of the filial spirit; and *it is possible and incumbent on all men, because all are sons.*"†

Let me take a little time to verify this statement. Dr. Wm. Adams Brown of Union, is perhaps the most

* "The place of Christ in Modern Theology," p. 445.

† Ibid, p. 448.

eminent professor of theology in the Presbyterian church. These are his words:

"We have a better understanding of the Gospel of Jesus, the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the worth of the individual human soul, greatness through service, salvation through sacrifice, the Kingdom of God as the goal of humanity—these truths, so inexhaustible in their richness and freshness, are seen to be his peculiar contribution to the religious thought of the race." *

Professor George B. Stevens of Yale, was one of our strongest Congregational teachers. He said:

"For [Jesus] the term Father best expresses God's nature and relation to men. . . . As applied to God it carries with it all the meaning which the human analogy is adapted to suggest." †

Dr. William Newton Clarke, not long ago taken to his rest, was the first of the Baptist leaders of theology. "In the doctrine of the personal Fatherhood of God," he says, "lay the exceptional power of Jesus' teaching. He set it forth most vividly in the parable of the Prodigal Son—or rather of the True Father; and in the Sermon on the Mount he made it the foundation of right living for members of his kingdom. No student should fail to study the Fatherhood of God in the Sermon on the Mount." ‡

President King of Oberlin, is a master in theology. This is his testimony: "Christ's conception of God as

* "The Essence of Christianity" p. 299.

† "The Christian Doctrine of Salvation," p. 264.

‡ "An Outline of Christian Doctrine," p. 268.

Father must be taken as the really ruling conception, determining all else in theology." *

Such is the explanation which the new theology gives of God's relation to men. It is not, really, very new; it is just as new as the Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the Prodigal Son, no newer. It is the precise and simple truth which Jesus taught about the Father, unburdened of the fictions of mediæval political science.

Some may be thinking that if the doctrine of Fatherhood thus supplants the doctrine of sovereignty, no foundations will be left for the maintenance of justice, for the upholding of God's rectoral honor, for the punishment of sin. That is an apprehension which widely prevails, and men are often heard charging that the new theology has abolished all the sanctions of law and has no terrors or warnings for transgressors. I trust that we shall be able to see, before this course of lectures is finished, that this is very far from being true. The new theology does not blink the facts of life, and the facts of retribution are too palpable to be ignored. The doctrine of the Fatherhood has to be interpreted in connection with an order of nature in which we all live, and in which sin is punished with a severity and a certainty which the old theology never began to conceive. Of all this we shall have more to say at another time.

But to-night I wish that we might take home to ourselves this one thought that God is our Father and that we are his children. Our Father — the Father of us all! I suppose that the Lord's Prayer is a prayer which every

* "Reconstruction in Theology," p. 189.

human being ought to pray every day; that it expresses the truth which every human being ought to recognize. "Our Father." He is the Father not only of patriarchs and prophets, of saints and martyrs, of the holy and excellent of the earth, he is the Father of publicans and sinners, of heathen men and criminals, of the vilest and the worst, just as truly as of the purest and the best. It is the one word that we have to speak to all sorts and conditions of men—the one message which every messenger of God has to deliver,—"God is your Father, you are all his children!" That was what Jesus told them all; it is the gospel which he has commissioned us to speak. If you are down in the depths of degradation and misery, laden with the sense of guilt and shame, humiliated by many failures to free yourself from the bonds of evil habit, hopeless about your own condition,—to you, even to you, I have no other word than that God is your Father and that you are his child. It is his nature that you have inherited and that you are soiling and crippling and abusing in your sin. You will never be so much ashamed of yourself as you ought to be until this truth has somehow been brought home to you. What right have you to be where you are, being what you are? What right have you to permit a God-given nature, faculties so royal, capabilities so godlike, to become so degraded? And there is no excuse for it. Heredity is no excuse. Heredity! Your heredity is from God. He is your Father. Deeper than all other strains of ancestral tendency is this fact that your nature comes from God. That is

the one fact that must never be blurred in all your thinking.

Environment is no excuse for you. Environment! God is the great first fact in all your environment, no matter where you may be. There is no place of temptation in which he is not nearer to you than any human influence can be. His help, his strength, his protective power have been round about you every minute of your life. All you had to do at any instant was to open your thought and your desire to him, and he would come in and deliver you from the evil.

No, there is no excuse. A son of God, with the infinite love always encompassing him, with all the powers of the omnipotent pledged to him, has no need to be a brute or a fool or a coward or a weakling; he ought to be a man; that is what it means to be a son of God. He can be, if he wants to be. Let him not palliate his fault. Let him repent of it, and lay hold on the grace that can save him, and prove his birthright.

Perhaps you are saying, "If God is my Father I shall surely be rescued from this pit, by and by, no matter what I may do; he will save me in spite of myself." No: he will not do that, just because he is your Father. The one thing that every wise father respects is his child's personality. He will not overbear or coerce his choices, in the highest things. If our heavenly Father were a despot he might compel us to obey; he could not compel us to love. He is not a despot; he is a Father; he wants our love, and he will wait until we freely give it to him. He will let

us suffer; yea, he will suffer with us, but he will not try to coerce our love. The father's true attitude is expressed by one writer thus: "We are not to say 'I will conquer that child, no matter what it may cost him,' but we are to say 'I will help that child to conquer himself, no matter what it may cost me.' " * That is what fatherhood means. That is what God's Fatherhood means. You have made him suffer a great deal already; how much more suffering are you going to cause him, by your disobedience and ingratitude?

"A suffering God!" some one is exclaiming: "Is not that a heresy?" I dare say it is, but as President King says "we must unhesitatingly admit that without which God can be no real God to us."

"Theology has no falser idea," says Fairbairn, "than that of the impassibility of God. If he is capable of sorrow he is capable of suffering, and were he without the capacity for either he would be without any feeling of the evil of sin or the misery of man. The very truth that comes by Jesus Christ may be said to be summed up in the passibility of God." † And President King goes on: "Certainly with the increasingly clear vision which the social consciousness is giving us, of sympathetic, unselfish, definitely self-sacrificing, loving leadership even among men, we shall not rest satisfied with less in God. We must have a suffering, seeking, loving God; because our Father, suffering in our sin, bearing as a burden the sin of each, and not satisfied

* Quoted in King's "Theology and the Social Consciousness," p. 110.

† "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology," p. 483.

while one turns away; no mere on-looker, but in all our afflictions, himself afflicted. The cross of Christ, then, is only an honest showing of the actual facts of God's seeking, suffering love."*

That is what God's Fatherhood means, and it is a mighty meaning, if the world can only be brought to understand it. No other truth has such power to make evil doers ashamed of their evil-doings, to convince them of sin, to call them back to the ways of righteousness. There is an evangelistic power in it, if it can be preached with conviction, which no other doctrine possesses. It was the one message of Phillips Brooks; he had only one sermon, as he said; especially in his last years it was all an impassioned appeal to men to recognize their sonship with God, and live in the light and the joy and the power of it. Something like this he was always saying: "If Christ can make you know yourself; if as you walk with him day by day he can reveal to you your sonship to the Father: if, keeping company with him, you can come more and more to know how native is goodness and how unnatural is sin to the soul of man; if, dwelling with Him who is both God and man you can come to believe both in God and in man through him, then you are saved,—saved from contempt, saved from despair, saved with courage and hope and charity and the power to resist temptation and the passionate pursuit of perfection." †

This was the word that thrilled and swayed the vast audiences of Wall street brokers at the Lenten

* "Theology and the Social Consciousness," p. 221.

† "The Light of the World," p. 22.

noon days, — that sent men out into the street with faces blanched and knees trembling under them because a new vision had come to them of the meaning of life.

O that God would help all of us, his ministers, to make men see this one fact of their relation to him; to make them feel all the honor of it, and all the shame of it; to make them realize the misery and the guilt and the folly of the Prodigal's condition, and so to say, "I will arise and go unto my Father."

III.

NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL

(41)

"We pray no more, made lowly wise,
For miracle and sign;
Anoint our eyes to see within
The common, the divine.

"We turn from seeking thee afar
And in unwonted ways,
To build from out our daily lives
The temples of thy praise.

"And if thy casual comings, Lord,
To hearts of old were dear,
What joy shall dwell within the faith
That finds thee ever near!

"And nobler yet shall duty grow,
And more shall worship be,
When thou art found in all our life,
And all our life in thee."

FREDERICK L. HOSMER.

III.

NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL.

WE are to study this evening the relations of nature and the supernatural. The changes which the new theology has made in our definitions of these terms are as important as any which we shall have to consider.

The relation between nature and the supernatural, as the old theology conceived it, was one of contrast. The supernatural was the anti-natural — what was contrary to nature. Indeed, it is generally true that the old theology was based on contrasts; in its theories it was essentially dualistic: God and man were contrasted natures; the human was not only morally but metaphysically the opposite of the divine; grace was the antithesis of law; justice the reverse of mercy; heaven the antipode of earth. The new theology is largely a process of unification; it carries on the kind of work which the Psalmist celebrated when he sang:

“Mercy and truth are met together,
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

The principle of reason is the principle of unity; it brings together and reconciles differences and contrarieties; it shows how things which were formerly regarded as hostile and contradictory are included in a larger truth. And this is the work which has been done for

theology in the enlargement of human knowledge. Nature and the supernatural are no longer conceived to be opposite poles of thought, they are seen to be inseparably related; different sides of the same phenomena.

The old conception was that the supernatural appeared in the world for the purpose of interrupting or violating the order of nature; that was its mission, that was its justification; unless in some way breaches could be made in the natural order, unless it could be demonstrated that there was a Power strong enough to break in upon the uniformities of natural law and set them aside, there would, it was argued, be no adequate reason for believing in the existence of God. Miracles were defined as such interferences with the natural order, and were defended as proofs of the truth of revelation. "Do we believe," asks Dr. Mark Hopkins "with our best philosophers, either that the laws of nature are only the stated mode in which God operates, or that all nature, with all its laws, is perfectly under his control? Then we can find no difficulty in believing that such a God may, at any time when the good of his creatures requires it, *change the mode of his operation, and suspend those laws.*"

It is true, indeed, that we cannot deny to God this power, but with our present habits of thinking we might find it difficult to believe that if he had this power he would exercise it. Our modern ways of looking at things make us suppose that the uniformity of natural law expresses most clearly not only the truth and power but also the beneficence of God; and variations from this uniformity are therefore rather a burden than a

help to our faith in his goodness. This is the real difficulty which thoughtful men find at the present day, with the old theory of miracles. They see in the regularity and invariability of natural causes wonderful evidences of the fidelity and the goodness of the Creator; to tell them that God comes into this order now and then and suspends its operations or sets it aside, does not confirm their faith in him, but rather tends to weaken it.

If any unusual event should take place, or should be reported as having taken place, thoughtful men of this generation would not, therefore deny that it could have taken place; they would carefully examine the evidence for it, and if this evidence seemed conclusive their inference would be, not that this unusual event was the result of the violation or interruption by the Creator of the laws of nature, but that it was rather the working out of some law not yet discovered, some deeper and diviner principle of life whose operation is yet to be revealed. Many things have happened, within the lifetime even of those who are not yet old, which were very marvelous. If they had been predicted beforehand we should undoubtedly have pronounced them violations of law, — miracles, and therefore impossible, since the day of miracles, we are always saying, is past. If we had been told forty years ago that we might be able to converse freely with friends a thousand miles away, hearing their speech distinctly, and recognizing their voices, we should have ridiculed the suggestion as the vagary of some visionary brain. With all the laws of sound we knew at that time this seemed utterly at vari-

ance. If we had been told twenty years ago that we should be able to penetrate with our sight a pine board an inch thick, and discern objects on the other side of it, we should have hooted at that as a glaring denial of the most indubitable laws of optics. Nothing recorded in the New Testament is more contrary to universal human experience than were the phenomena of the telephone and the Roentgen rays when they first appeared. How many more laws of nature there may be whose existence is yet unknown to us no man can predict. And it may be that wonderful events which have taken place in the past, have followed certain lines of natural causation whose nature and operation are yet unknown to us, but which we shall better understand in future days.

"The *religious interest* in miracles," says President King "is essentially the same as that involved in any ideal view of the world. The insistence on miracle for the religious man means the insistence on a living God, and the insistence that, though mechanism is absolutely universal in extent, nevertheless, as Lotze says, 'it is completely subordinate in significance.' We are not to make a god of mechanism, it declares, nor put mechanism above God. *The universality of law, therefore, is to theology only the perfect consistency in the modes of activity of God in carrying out his immutable purpose of love.* Hence God will always act according to law, — that is, in perfect consistency with his unchanging law of love; but his action may or may not always be formulable under any of the laws of nature known to us.

"The religious world, this means, cannot be content with special acts of love here and there; it must know that all the action of God rests on love. Just as in the modification of the design argument by evolution, we replace various smaller designs testifying to intelligence by one all-embracing design, so do we here replace the many miracles testifying to love by the one great miracle that an infinite purpose of love is the source of all: 'All's love yet all's law.' That is, the religious view must hold that the so-called 'departures from the uniformity of nature' are themselves according to law, called out by the same consistency of the loving purpose of God as the so-called uniformity. Rare phenomena are not lawless."*

Such is the attitude of the new theology toward those events which are described as miraculous. To maintain that such events—which are simply unusual events—could not occur is, it insists, utterly unscientific; science does not dogmatize in any such way as that: to describe them as violations of natural law is, on the other hand, irrational; we have no good reason for believing that natural law is violated; the only reasonable account that can be given of them, if they can be proved to have occurred, is that they belong in the natural order; that they are parts of God's ways which we have not yet learned to trace.

Of course all this involves a relation of God to the world far more intimate and vital than that with which the old theology made us familiar. It implies that all natural law is in its origin and in the power

* "Reconstruction in Theology," pp. 61, 62.

which it reveals essentially supernatural; that there is a supernatural side to nature; that it is all a manifestation, in orderly ways, of the wisdom and the will of God. It is not in special providences and abnormal instances of intervention that we are to look for God, it is in the whole movement of nature. In every natural process, in the vital warmth of the sun, in the breathing of the winds, in the germination and bloom and fruitage of the plants, in the marvels that are wrought in the cells of which all living tissue is composed, in the beating of our own hearts we discern his presence; he is the Power behind all law, he is the Life of all life; he is in all and over all and through all.

In my childhood and youth any unusual appearance of the sky startled and alarmed me; I had learned to look for God only in phenomena that were unusual; such an exceptional appearance might be a sign of his presence. I can well remember the dread which filled my soul one hazy autumn afternoon when I was working by myself in a lonely field, because the sky took on an aspect which I had never before seen it wearing. About the same time, perhaps a little earlier, a most brilliant comet appeared in the heavens, and that, too, because it was unusual, was felt by many to be a portent, — a sign of the presence of God in the world. I have not forgotten how I was wont to bury my head in the coverlid when I went to bed at night because the tail of that comet could be seen through the window near the foot of my bed. My fear was the natural reflection of the ideas concerning God which were then prevalent; others about me no doubt to some extent

shared this terror; if some of them did not share it it was because they were more stolid or less imaginative.

So we find as we go back for a century or two that unusual natural phenomena of any kind were sure to be regarded as the signs of God's presence, — hurricanes, thunderstorms, high tides, pestilences — any abnormal event — anything out of the ordinary course of nature, was likely to be interpreted by the most devout persons as an evidence that God had come into his world. All this was the natural inference from the theory that God reveals himself through interruptions of the natural order, through suspensions or violations of the laws of nature. The entire movement of modern thought as it has grappled with the great problems of life has led us away from this notion to the conclusion that the wisdom and goodness of God are revealed not in violations of the natural order but in its continuity and uniformity. What men once regarded as signs of God's presence and power we should now feel to be evidences of his weakness and caprice. An exceptionally dark day is not so clear a proof to us of God's presence as an ordinarily bright day is; a comet gives us not so good reason for believing in him as does the sun traveling in the greatness of his strength, or Orion and the Pleiades, keeping their nightly watch above our heads. The comet is *not so good* a witness for God as are the neighbor planets or the steadfast stars, because it is so *infrequent* a visitor, and because the nature of its movements and the laws of its being are not so well known. Nevertheless the comets themselves do witness for him,

for, as we now know, they are under law; their orbits have been measured and their years computed. They witness for him now not because they are lawless and vagarious, but because they are known to be no less obedient to law than are the planets or the fixed stars.

If, then, we mean by miracles violations of the laws of nature, we shall have to say that the new theology does not believe in miracles; but if we mean by miracles, evidences of the presence of God in his world, the new theology teaches that *nature is all miraculous from center to circumference*, since there is no part of it in which he is not always present and at work. It is not in occasional invasions or incursions into the domain of natural law that he makes himself known, it is in the entire operation of nature.

For Nature, as we have found, cannot be interpreted at all unless you bring to it conceptions which are entirely above and apart from the mere mechanical connection with which science is often satisfied. Nature is intelligible only to intelligence. It has no meaning until a Mind is there to interpret it.

Take all the multiform and marvellous phenomena of what we know as color—the color of clouds and skies, of leaves and blossoms, of rocks and earth, of gems and plumage—where is it? What is it? Does it belong to these natural objects themselves? Certainly not. It exists only in the vision of the man that perceives it. The blind man sees no color; the color-blind man does not see it as it is. “Color,” says Fairbairn “does not inhere in things; Nature by herself is without it. It is there because man is there, possessed

of the sense by which it is not simply perceived, but, as it were, constituted."*

Precisely so with regard to sound. There is no sound where there is no ear to hear it. There are vibrations of the air which are calculated to produce sound, but what we mean by sound is simply the impression made by these vibrations upon the ear that is fitted to receive them, an impression noted by the mind. There is no music until the man is there to listen to it.

"And we could go on," says Fairbairn "from sense to sense, from ear and eye to taste and smell, and by analysis enlarge and confirm the conclusion that the qualities which our senses perceive are not things merely of external nature; but that either they could not be or could not seem to be without the constitutive faculty or the interpretative personalty of man. In other words, nature in her own right is, if not a void, yet at most a mere aggregate of mechanical properties; her pomp and beauty, her voice and all her harmonies she owes to Mind. We receive from her what we have given to her, and without us she would not be what she is." †

Carrying the argument forward, the same writer argues, that we only know of the existence of Energy in the world outside through the action of our own wills. It is by putting forth power and overcoming resistance that we learn what power is. We therefore only know causation because we are ourselves causes. "A world of necessitated beings could not form or conceive the notion of energy;" it is only because we are personalities

* "The Philosophy of the Christian Religion," p. 31.

† Ibid, p. 33.

with free will, that we know what it is. Thus this great category of energy which underlies all science is essentially a spiritual conception. We see how it is that all which gives significance or intelligibility to physical nature is the free intelligence of man. I am condensing for you Fairbairn's argument here, and you will be glad to have me go on with him a little further:

"Since the intellect can interpret Nature, Nature is intelligible. Since Nature is intelligible there must be some correlation between its laws or methods and the rational processes in us; since there is this correlation between the intelligible world and the interpretative intellect they must embody one and the same intelligence. . . . But this argument admits a further development. The human intellect could not live unless embosomed by a universe which was in its constitution and contents as rational as itself. Reason could not live in a world where no reason was. If the world became mad, if its physical forces were now conserved and now destroyed; if continuity governed one day and accident the next; if gravitation now ruled and all rivers flowed to the sea and all lighter bodies fell toward the heavier; if again levitation reigned, and the sea turned itself into the rivers and rose above the mountains and the heavier bodies flew away from the lighter, what would the effect of this mad world be on this sane mind? Could mind in its presence maintain its sanity? . . . And does not this signify that we must have the correlation of the intellect and the intelligible before we can have either a rational mankind or any science of nature? But it signifies one thing more, viz.: that the Intelligence

which is embodied in this intelligible Nature is in kind and quality one with the intelligence embodied in its interpreter. The Reason that lives in Nature speaks a language that the reason personalized in man can understand and translate." *

The intelligence which is embodied in this intelligible Nature is God. He is immanent in nature. He fills every part of it with his presence; he reveals himself in every natural force, in every movement and process. And when we take Nature as including him, and expressing his thoughts and revealing him, then, as Fairbairn says, "the distinction between the natural and the supernatural ceases, or becomes thoroughly unreal. For the supernatural, as commonly taken, denotes a cause or will outside as well as above Nature, opposed to it and supersessive of its laws; but here it denotes a cause which is as native to nature as reason or thought is to man. Withdraw or paralyze the cause, and Nature as its effect ceases; *i. e.*, without the supernatural the natural can neither begin nor continue to be."

I trust that this discussion may have brought home to you the conviction that the new theology does not dispense with God, or banish him from his universe; that it brings him a great deal nearer to us than that old deistic conception did, which represented him as having contrived and set up a system of natural laws, and left them to work out his designs, only coming in, once in a while, by some miraculous intervention, to show us that he had power over the machinery. Nature, according to that conception, was a vast piece of mechanism, cun-

* Ibid, pp. 33-37.

ningly contrived, and exhibiting in its construction the divine wisdom and power; and God, as Carlyle says, was conceived of as sitting on the outside of it and seeing it go. There was really very little of God in that world which the theories of a past generation presented to our thought. We have got rid of that godless mechanism. We have found, in the words of Mr. Pike, that "all things exist as part of the process of his revealing; and every spirit of man, every flower, every atom of matter, is an open door into the presence of a God at hand and not afar off. At the same time * * * though the totality of phenomena arises from God's passing into activity it does not exhaust him. The whole of God is never disclosed. That only is true monotheism, transcending every deistic and pantheistic limitation alike, which contemplates God as neither absorbed in the universe nor excluded from it, but consciously comprehending the whole within himself as the unfolding of his own thoughts and energies. Modern science catches up the ancient strain of Hildebert's hymn and sings of God as

'Above all things, below all things;
Around all things, within all things;
Within all, but not shut in;
Around all, but not shut out;
Above all, as the Ruler:
Below all, as the Sustainer;
Around all as all-embracing Protection,
Within all, as the fullness of life.'

There are two sides to this truth of the immanence of God, both of which are full of wonder and signifi-

* "The Divine Drama," p. 5.

cance, but which we need to distinguish in our thought. The first is his presence in Nature, the second is his presence in our spiritual lives. In Nature his Power and his Reason are revealed, in our lives he makes known his Goodness and his Love.

His marvelous nearness to us in the world about us is a truth, when we begin to grasp it, which fills us with awe. This wonderful universe by whose might and majesty we are surrounded, in whose bosom we are cradled, by whose life we are nourished, is only the visible manifestation to us of God.

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit,
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;
If I make my bed in Sheol thou art there;
If I take the wings of the morning
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me
And thy right hand shall hold me.”

So sang the old Psalmist. Listen now to a seer of the twentieth century:

“When we picture man standing upon the earth, and the earth flying at a thousand-mile-a-minute rate through space, circling in unbroken obedience round the sun; and then when we picture sun, earth and man as enveloped by the Universe, we are beginning to make real to ourselves the actual truth and fact of things. As we see the sky arch over us and sweep round our world, so we see the vaster universal heaven sweep round and ensphere our solar system. We are held, sphere within sphere, the less enfolded in the greater out to the great-

est. We are ensphered by the Universe. * * * Within this universal sphere we have our existence, think our thought, do our work, and develop our personality.

"Vast symbol all this of the being of God. Perhaps more than symbol; perhaps expression in part of the reality. Perchance the infinite Universe that enfolds us is, in some sense, the infinite God enfolding us. Perchance our thousand-fold connection therewith is, in reality, thousand-fold connection with God. Perhaps we, in a way, rest upon God when we stand upon the earth, are encircled by God when enveloped by the air, breathe in God when we breathe the atmosphere, in some sense feed upon God when we feed upon bread, are vitalized by God when quickened by sunlight, and are held in the power of God when held in the grasp of earth, sun, and universe. Such, one may well be persuaded, is the deepest interpretation and truth of things. Living thus within the Universe is in reality living, moving and having one's being in God. And the ten thousand laws of the mighty system that lay hold of us and work day and night upon and in us are all powers that go forth from Him. In the vast Universe, therefore, that enspheres us, we see the infinite God ensphering us; and in the myriad laws that work in us, we see the myriad influences of God working out his will. All envelopes are divine envelopes in the last meaning of them. First and last we are held within an infinite enfolding Life; we are enveloped by God." *

But if even to the outer portals of sense these overwhelming evidences of the presence of God are brought,

* "God and Man," by E. E. Shumaker, Chap. I.

what shall we say of that inward revelation which is made to every soul? The ensphering God comes very close to us, but the indwelling God, — the God whose promptings are felt in our wishes, and whose light is shining in our thoughts, who makes himself the partner of our better selves and abides in us—what shall we say of him?

How near to us, O God, thou art!
Felt in the movement of the heart;
Nearer than self thou art to each,
The truth of thine indwelling teach.

Eyes art thou unto us, the blind;
We turn to thee ourselves to find;
We cannot open a door of prayer,
But thou art seeking entrance there.

O Father, Spirit, more than near,
Through all our thought thy voice we hear;
Our life would welcome thy control,
Emanuel, God within the soul.

Thou fill'st our being's hidden springs;
Thou givest our wishes heavenward wings;
We live thy life, we breathe thy breath,
And in thy presence is no death.

Such is the conception of God which the new theology gives us. He is the immanent God, filling the universe with the fullness of his being; he is the indwelling God, living in the closest and most vital relation with our spirits; how shall we compare him with the miracle-working God of the old theology whose home was in some far off heaven and whose presence in the world

was signalized only by some interruption of the order of the universe? Which conception of God is the more impressive, the more convincing? Would any one who has caught any glimpse of his glory as it is revealed in the modern conception of him, be willing to go back to the dim and flickering light of that old theory? I have lived with both theologies, and I know which is best to live by. When I hear the proposition that we return to those notions of the supernatural which prevailed when I entered the ministry, it seems much as if some generous soul should appear to the captain of the *Mauretania* as he stood on the bridge waiting for his ship to be unloosed from her moorings, and offer him the paddle of his canoe with which to propel his vessel across the Atlantic; or if some well-meaning philanthropist should meet you in the dazzling light of a California noon-day, and give you a small tin lantern, with a tallow dip inside, to enable you to find your way home.

These thoughts which I am trying to help you to grasp tonight, have tremendous significance. Of course, it is the simplest and most obvious thing to say, that if these things are so, there is no other truth of which a man can think which has such vast and vital importance. Such a conception of the presence in our lives of the ever living God, ought to make every man who can think thrill in every nerve. I do not mean that it ought to frighten him, unless he is consciously and wilfully doing what he knows to be wrong, but it ought to make him stop and think. No man who gets these central truths of the present day theology into his mind can be a trifler; he will feel that it is a wonderful world that he is

living in; he will feel that life has for him some august significance. If he knows that it is no figure of speech but the soberest scientific fact that he lives and moves and has his being in God; that he never lifts his hand without using God's strength; that he never moves his lips without borrowing God's power; that even in his sin and his degradation he is prostituting energies that are divine in their origin, and perverting power that God lets him use, — if such is the meaning of life to him, what manner of man ought he to be? Can a man go flippantly and jauntily along the way of life, with a consciousness of such a partnership in destiny as this? Can any man be mean enough to ask or permit the Eternal Goodness to be partner with him in orgies of animalism, in scrambles after pelf, in cruel plunderings of his fellow men, or in reckless disregard of their welfare, — in vain-glorious self-exaltation, in bitter and fierce and unloving judgments? Surely this sense of the immediate presence of God in our lives would bring the blush to many a cheek, and wring from us the cry

“Search me, O God, and know my heart,
Try me and know my thoughts,
And see if there be any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.”

But, on the other hand, what dignity does such a truth lend to human life — what possibilities does it set before us, what hope does it kindle, what courage does it inspire! If we are thus in every normal process of our lives in unison with God himself, vibrating to his touch, using at every moment the resources of omnipotence,

what is not possible for you and me? Join this truth with the one we found in our last study, that this infinite Power enveloping our lives, throbbing in our veins, pouring its tides of strength into our frames, is infinite Love, — that Fatherhood is the interpretation to us of its purpose concerning us, — and what a mighty hope must spring up in our hearts! We can begin to understand what the Psalmist meant when he cried:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

There is no nobility to which we may not aspire, no purity which we may not covet, no greatness of spirit which we may not possess, no glory of manhood or womanhood to which we may not lay claim. All the help we need to live the bravest, whitest, cleanest life, — to attain unto the most glorious manhood and womanhood, is nearer to us than we are to ourselves, — it is in the very breath of our nostrils and the pulsation of our arteries and the aspirations of our hearts. We have not to climb to heaven to bring it down or to plunge into the depths to call it forth: “Behold it is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart!”

You will sometimes hear people saying that the new theology has no God in it, and no gospel in it; may God forgive them! They know not what they are saying. How crudely and dimly I am bringing its truths before you, I know very well; it is but a faint echo that I can give you of its inspiring message, but there is truth here, if some one could only make you see and feel it that

has in it the power of God unto salvation. You would know and feel, if the truth could be brought home to you, that no man of you can afford any longer to live a groveling or a grasping life, that you must live as sons of God, children of the light, servants and helpers and saviors of men.

IV.

SIN AND SALVATION.

(63)

"O Infinite of righteousness,
Breath of our inmost being!
Thy purity will cleanse and bless
The soul from evil fleeing;
We hide our sin-stained hearts in Thee,
And pray, 'As Thou art, let us be!'

"O infinitely Loving One,
Redeemer, Guide, and Brother!
By Thee, the warm, revealing Sun,
We see and love each other;
With Thy deep Life our lives we blend,
And find ourselves in Thee, our Friend."

LUCY LARCOM.

IV.

SIN AND SALVATION.

WE are to think, this evening, of what the new theology has to say about sin and salvation. It is a wide field; I fear that we shall not be able to cover it, very successfully; but we will try to get into our minds some of the most important elements of the newer religious thinking on these great subjects.

There are theories which go by the name of new theology which vacate these great words of most of their meaning. There are many who openly or tacitly repudiate the idea of sin; who ignore all the vast content of human experience in which the sense of sin finds expression, or seek to explain it away. If we should believe these philosophers we should conclude that the feeling of guilt, of blame, of ill-desert, which finds voice in the literature of all peoples and which so often burdens our own hearts and darkens our lives, is a mere illusion, that it represents no reality. It is sometimes openly said that there are no sins but those of ignorance; that every man always does what he believes, when he is doing it, to be right; that the transgressions which bring upon us suffering and misery are due to a defective understanding, and not to a perverted will.

Much is made, in this philosophy, of heredity and environment; the fact that some of us are born with strong predispositions to sensuality or selfishness, and that many of us are surrounded by influences which tend to

mislead our judgments, and pervert our choices, is pointed to as the explanation of those parts of our conduct which are evidently injurious to ourselves and others. And there is, of course, a great deal of philosophizing which practically denies the fact of moral freedom; which teaches that all our conduct is produced by causes acting upon our wills; that we have no more choice or responsibility than that of the clock-hammer which strikes when the machinery sets it in motion. If any man calls this the new theology, I have only to say that his new theology is not mine. It would be ridiculous to call it a theology of any kind, indeed; for theology is the science which tries to explain the relations of man and God, and this doctrine abolishes God and makes of man nothing but a machine, — a creature destitute of all the central attributes of what we know as manhood. Unless man possesses a genuine moral freedom, moral initiative, power to choose between right and wrong, there can be no such thing as theology and no such thing as morality; there is, indeed, no such thing as personality, and really no such thing as a rational doctrine of human society. "The whole social consciousness," says President King, "rests upon the assumption that man has *worth*, as a being capable of *character* or will or of happiness, and is deserving in some worthy sense to be called a child of God. If the social consciousness is * * * with any fairness to be called the recognition of the fully personal, this reverence for the personal initiative of men cannot be lacking in it. * * * Nor should it escape our notice that we strike at the root of all possible reverence for God, if we deny a real initiative to man. We

have no possible philosophic explanation of sin or error, consistent with any real reverence for God, if a true human will is denied. In Professor Bowne's vigorous language: 'In a system of necessity, every thought, belief, conviction, whether truth or superstition, arises with equal necessity with every other. * * * On this plane of necessary effort the actual is all, and the ideal distinctions of true and false have as little meaning as they would have on the plane of mechanical forces.' " *

In fact the present day theology, so far as it finds the revelation of essential truth in the social consciousness, must emphasize more and more the fact of moral freedom; for the elementary fact of the social consciousness is the respect for personality; its one emphatic testimony is the worth of every man, — the sacredness of manhood; and if a man's a man, and has the rights of a man, he must have the responsibilities of a man. His moral character is the central thing, and there is no such thing as moral character without moral freedom and responsibility.

These are facts which the new theology recognizes as central in all its thinking. The more emphasis it puts on personality the more sure is the fact of sin, which is simply the revolt of a free personality against moral law. And a theology which is truly scientific, — which takes in all the facts of human life and fairly estimates them — will have to make room in its theories for some recognition of the appalling fact of human sinfulness. "One need not be philosopher or theologian," says Professor Clarke, "to find out that superficial study only deepens

* "Theology and the Social Consciousness," pp. 181, 182.

the conception of its greatness. It is conceivable that the following facts might be thoroughly ascertained, in detail and in total, and morally estimated; the facts about money, regarded as a desirable possession, and the passions, and practices that are indulged for the sake of it; the facts about untruthfulness, including dishonesty, fraud, slander and detraction; the facts about sexual passion, with comparison of the moral value that is sacrificed for the sake of gratifying it; the facts about intoxication, with similar comparison of moral values; the facts about profanity with estimate of the moral degradation that is unthinkingly welcomed by those who indulge in it; the facts about cruelty, whether thoughtless brutality or deliberate love of inflicting pain; the facts about anger and uncontrolled passion in general, developing into malice and into murder; the facts about moral shallowness, irresponsibility, untrustworthiness, surrender of self-respect, contentment with low and unworthy life; the facts about daily selfishness, as over against kindness, humanity and love." One wonders a little that Professor Clarke did not specify in this ugly inventory the facts about the gambling habit, in all its phases, which is eating out the heart of manliness and honor more rapidly than any other social vice, and the facts about political infidelity and corruption which include bribery, venality and shameless treachery to the highest trusts. Perhaps, however, he meant to include these under the category of the love of money, and the practices that are indulged for the sake of it. "Such an investigation," the writer goes on, "though of course not practicable, is quite conceivable and the amount of evil

which such a study of familiar facts would bring to light is utterly appalling. It is true that much good would also be found, and that the responsibility of the evil is often divided between him who commits it and the ancestors who have made him what he is. It is true also that some part of the evil that is commonly called sin is rightly chargeable to imperfection or immaturity or ignorance; nevertheless, observation shows that sin is the abiding fact of the human race, just as Christ and the consent of ages testify.”*

These are the phenomena of human sinfulness. What, now, is the nature of sin?

It is well to dispose at once of some of the traditional theories, which have played a great part in the history of Christian thought.

The theology on which most of us older folks were brought up divided sin into two categories—original and actual sin. Actual sin was the conscious and intentional transgression of the moral law, the evil deeds or the culpable omissions of which we in our own persons and by our own choices are guilty. This is the kind of sin of which we have been talking. Concerning this the new theology, as I understand it, raises no question. It is a phenomenon too sadly familiar to be disputed.

But the other kind of sin—what the theologians call original sin—the new theology does not believe in. The old theology held that on account of the sin of Adam all the descendants of Adam were made sinners. It was not only that we inherited from our first ancestor weakened or impaired moral natures, tendencies to

*“Outline of Christian Theology,” pp. 229, 230.

evil. That might well have been true. The doctrine was that we had inherited his guilt; that God held us blameworthy on account of his sin and punishable because of it. Adam, as the theory figured it, was the federal head of the race. God had a covenant with him, that if he was obedient all his descendants should be virtuous and blessed; while if he disobeyed they should all share the penalty of his disobedience. He disobeyed and as the old catechism says, we "all sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression," — or as the New England Primer more tersely put it:

"In Adam's fall
We sinned all."

In consequence of this sin of our first parent we all come into the world "under the wrath and curse" of God, "and [are] so made liable to all the miseries of this life, death itself and the pains of hell forever." Thus, for nothing that we had done, or consented to, the old theology told us that God held us all deserving of eternal punishment in hell.

The doctrine of election came in here, however, and assured us that God, out of his mere good pleasure, has chosen some of these doomed and lost ones upon whom he would bestow his grace; and the sins of these were remitted through the expiation made by Christ upon the cross. Among infants who died in infancy, before they were capable of actual transgression, some were elect and some non-elect; the elect infants were saved by the blood of Christ; the non-elect were consigned to

eternal misery on account of original sin, — their implication in the sin of Adam.

It has been a good while now since this doctrine of infant damnation was taught in the pulpits of the most orthodox churches. It has been so long that a great many fairly intelligent people have been heard denying that it ever was believed or taught. Dr. Henry Morton Dexter, one of our great Congregational historians, once took me up quite sharply, when I asserted that the doctrine was formerly one of the cardinal doctrines of the Calvinistic creed, and challenged me to prove that any Congregational minister had ever taught it. It was perfectly easy for me to fill columns of his newspaper with quotations from sermons of the greatest Congregational divines most explicitly declaring that non-elect infants dying in infancy were doomed to eternal misery. Calvin himself said that it was a horrible decree, but that there was no disputing it.

The doctrine was most plainly taught in the Westminster Confession, of the Presbyterian Church (of which the Savoy Confession of the Congregational Churches was a simple duplicate) until 1902, when the General Assembly made a declaratory statement practically eliminating it from the Confession of Faith. It is a long time, as I have said, since it has been preached in the Presbyterian Church or the Congregational churches. Yet the implications of this doctrine of original sin linger yet in some of the beliefs of the church. There are still a good many Christians who are more or less troubled with fear lest their infants dying unbaptized

may miss the blessedness of heaven. This is a survival of that dreadful doctrine. It is based on the belief that we are all still under the curse of the Adamic transgression. Baptism, it is supposed by some, cleanses infants from the taint of original sin; but when baptism is omitted the wrath and curse of God still rests upon the souls of all born of woman — adults or infants.

It is amazing that a notion, so horribly unethical, should linger in the minds of human beings in the twentieth century. It is strange that any one who has known anything about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ should deem it possible that he could count all the children of Adam guilty of Adam's sin, and worthy of eternal death because of something that happened thousands of years before they were born.

But is it not true, you ask, that we suffer the consequences of the sins of our ancestors? Yes; we are so linked together that the evil that parents do entails upon their children weakness and disability and suffering; but sin is not entailed; sin is not inherited. The children are not to blame for what their parents did, nor are they to blame for being in this weak and disabled condition; they are not to blame for anything which they inherit; every just man pities them for that evil inheritance; how much more does our heavenly Father regard them with compassion, and seek to rescue them from their infirmities! If they come into the world with blunted sensibilities, and abnormal cravings, and tendencies to evil, he takes all that into consideration, in judging their conduct. You and I would do that, and if we, being evil,

can make such allowances, how much more will our heavenly Father deal mercifully with his children!

So then, the new theology puts aside, as essentially pagan, the old doctrine of original sin by which most of the old theology was shaped. Sin cannot be inherited. God is just. Do I call this the new theology? It is not really so very new. Listen to the prophet Ezekiel:

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

How the framers of that old dogma managed to interpret this eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel I have never been able to understand.

There is no such thing as inherited sin. Sin, as old Dr. Emmons insisted, consists in sinning. All sin is actual sin. And now what is the nature of actual sin?

It is sometimes supposed to be simple animalism — the predominance of the bodily appetites. But the bodily appetites are not necessarily sinful. Under normal control they are elements of wholesome life. It is true that the progress of man is from animalism to spirituality, and that many of his worst temptations are due to the imperfect subjugation of the lower nature to the higher, yet as one says, "the sin does not dwell in the fact that man still retains a nature akin to that of the animals below him, but in this, that the nature that is akin to God yields to the nature that is common to man and beasts."

Yet it still remains true that the worst sins of man have nothing to do with the flesh; the perversion of the higher nature is deadlier than the indulgence of the lower.

We may say that sin is simply abnormal action. It is the violation, by the soul, of its own law of life. Whatever tends to the perfection of my soul, of my manhood, in its physical, intellectual and moral elements, is right; whatever interferes with that tendency and prevents me from realizing my manhood is wrong.

Does some one say that sin is an offense against God? Well, that is true. But what Matthew Arnold says is also profoundly true, that the stream of tendency by which all things strive to fulfil the law of their being is only another name for God. That is what we mean by the immanent God. Any action of my will which hinders me from fulfilling the law of my being is therefore a sin against God. God is working in me, to perfect my manhood. Whatever I do to obstruct that working, to impair my manhood is a sin against him.

But we have not yet reached the heart of the matter. And here we will let Professor Clarke help us once more:

“Sin may be viewed with reference to its motive and inner moral quality; we observe the evil, whether in act or in character and estimate it in the light of the principles from which it springs. Thus sin is *the placing of self-will and selfishness above the claims of love and duty.*

“Love looking upward toward God or outward toward man is the true law of life; and such love, filial and fraternal, will render it impossible for a man to be

a selfish, self-regarding, self-seeking person. It is true that there is a self-regard which in its place is not sinful, but normal and worthy; and yet to a man in the right attitude, not self but God and men will appear to be the chief aim to be regarded, and the general claim of duty will appear more urgent than all self-interest. Before God such a man will be humble, reverent and obedient, and toward men he will be brotherly and helpful. Never will he put self in the place of God as the Lord of his life, or in the place of humanity as that which he strives to benefit.

“Against this right position sin takes selfishness or self-will, as the final law of action. Under its impulse a man says, ‘I will act from myself and for myself. My own will and not God shall be the source and law of my action, and my own self and not humanity shall be the end to which my action is directed. Nor shall duty itself be so strong with me as the claim of my own self-will.’ This assertion of selfishness or self-will as the law of action is the characteristic assertion of a sinful life.”*

This is the root from which has sprung that vast and noxious growth which we were contemplating a little while ago. And when sin is thus defined, as “the placing of selfishness or self-will above the claims of love and duty,” few will be found, I think, to claim for themselves sinlessness. The presence of a principle in our lives which makes us prefer our own pleasure to the welfare of others,—which makes us willing to prosper either at the expense of others or in careless

* “Outline of Christian Theology,” pp. 235, 236.

disregard of their happiness; which makes us want to think of ourselves as the center of our world, and leads us to desire that all the rest of the creation shall revolve about us obediently, ministering to our pleasure, gratifying our whims, deferring to our judgment,—this is the root out of which the sin of the world has grown. A recent essayist speaks of a temper of mind which, as it contemplates the struggle for existence, regards “indifference to others and absolute self-interest, [as] not only permissible, but * * * more and more positively demanded.” These modern realists say: “The world we see about us is one where only a few can succeed and where many must fail. There are not good things enough for all. The question is not whether such a state of things is right or just. On the contrary it must be admitted to be a hard, unreasonable, unjust universe. It is not for the individual, however, set without consent of his own in such a universe, to change it. His only problem is to make it certain that in such a universe he is ‘the hammer, not the anvil.’”

In that temper of mind we discover the inmost principle of the sin of the world. It implies a scornful and even contemptuous unbelief in God; it is the revelation of a consciousness which is essentially anti-social.

Now, God forbid that I should accuse all my fellowmen of consciously cherishing such a temper as this. I think that there are comparatively few who would ever admit to themselves any such purpose. Yet most of us find ourselves, now and then, acting on some such principle, and all of us feel, very often, that this kind of egoism, by which a man is disposed to look

out for himself, no matter what happens to the rest, is the heart of the world's sin. It is because there is so much of this in the world that the world is so full of conflict and misery. When we look abroad, upon the poverty and suffering and ignorance and distress still abounding; when we see what vast human needs there are unsatisfied,—this on the one hand, and on the other how much of luxurious and even profligate expenditure there is; how many there are who are thinking only of their own enjoyments and diversions, who are utterly oblivious of the misery and the misfortune that surround them, we cannot help feeling that it is a very selfish world, and it is rather hard for us to convince ourselves that we are not ourselves more or less involved in all this greed and heartlessness.

It is certainly true to say that society, in these days, is experiencing a good deal of what may be properly called conviction of sin. We all know and feel that something is wrong with the social order, and I do not think that it requires any very subtle analysis to discover that the root of that wrong is the selfishness in human hearts. It isn't the trusts; it isn't the corporations; it isn't the trades unions; it isn't the tariff; it isn't capitalism—these are only symptoms: it is the rampant and riotous selfishness in human hearts: it is the disposition to look out for ourselves, to get what we can, and have a good time, and not care much what becomes of the hindmost. This is the fundamental trouble with our industrial society from top to bottom, and the malady is epidemic, there are not many of us who are not more or less affected by it.

If this is the essential nature of sin,—if it is essentially a kind of self-love which makes us indifferent to the welfare of others,—it is rather absurd to deny its existence or its prevalence. The new theology, at any rate, is not disposed to ignore it. It is a stubborn fact, a social fact of portentous dimensions. We do not need to go back to Adam, or to resort to any theories of imputation; the evidence confronts us whenever we open our eyes.

To prove that a man is a sinner it is not necessary, then, to show that he is a murderer or a liar or a thief or a counterfeiter or a forger or a burglar; he may even be a man who never drinks nor smokes nor dances nor plays cards nor goes to the theater; the only question is whether he is chargeable with putting selfishness or self-will above love and duty. That sin is enough to shut any man out of heaven. There cannot be any heaven where that spirit is. That spirit brings hell wherever it goes, in this world and every other world.

If this is the nature of sin, what is the penalty of sin? The old theology made this penalty to consist of suffering inflicted upon the sinner by a judicial process in the future life. Hell was a place of eternal punishment, provided by the divine justice, to which were consigned after death and the judgment all unforgiven sinners. Of the meaning of heaven and hell I shall speak in the next lecture. The penalty of sin will also be more fully considered at that time. It is sufficient to say that the new theology regards those conceptions of judicial punishment as based on analogies which convey much less than the whole truth, and teaches that

the reality of punishment is something much closer to our experience and more verifiable than those old theories made it.

The penalty of sin, as the new theology teaches, consists in the natural consequences of sin. Sin is selfishness; what, then, are the natural consequences of selfishness? If a man freely indulges this disposition to place his own interest and pleasure above the claims of love and duty what will be the natural effect upon the character of that man? You do not need to go to the creeds or to the Bible or to the theologians to find out; just read the newspapers and the novels, and keep your eyes open to what is going on about you. The new theology doesn't refer you to authorities on this subject—it goes straight to human life for its facts.

In the first place the man who indulges this selfish disposition will find it strengthening its hold upon him; that is a law of mind, and it works itself out in his experience. The habit of preferring his own happiness to other people's grows on him; he has less and less compunction about prospering at the expense of other people; he has less and less compassion for those less fortunate; he is more and more inclined to say that those whom he pushes from his path in his progress are themselves to blame for their misfortunes; he becomes more and more self-centered and intolerant and unsocial. This is the natural penalty of selfishness.

Other sins grow out of this by a logical necessity. The man who makes his own interest supreme is apt to think that those who interfere with his interests have no right to the truth, and deception or falsehood is the

natural consequences. When he begins to lie it is easy to keep on; every lie he tells is a seed from which other lies spring and multiply, thirty, sixty, an hundred fold. His love of the truth is weakened and gradually disappears.

Perhaps the animal propensities in him clamor for indulgence, and as it is always the self to which they minister they easily get their own way. These indulgences, also, grow into habits which strengthen as time goes on; the man comes more and more under the domain of his fleshly nature; his finer sensibilities are dulled; his imagination is filled with pictures of sensual delights; he loses his relish for cleanliness and manliness and purity; he becomes false and foul in thought and life.

It is needless to protract this analysis. These are facts which every one of you can verify in your daily observation. These are the natural penalties of sin, as they are working themselves out in the characters of men before your eyes every day. Perhaps some of you have even clearer evidence of them within your own consciousness, in your own experiences. The penalty of sin is sin. Whatsoever a man soweth *that* shall he also reap. If you sow selfishness you will reap selfishness. If you sow falsehood you will reap falsehood. If you sow to the flesh you will reap corruption. These are natural consequences. They are immediate. They are inevitable. They are cumulative.

There are also social consequences, of vast importance, on which I cannot dwell. Such a life affects other lives continually; it entails suffering and loss upon

the victims of its selfishness; it communicates contagion; it kindles resentments and antagonisms; it tends to produce enmity and strife and malevolence. What kind of a society would it be in which every man freely indulged his selfish tendencies, and permitted them to produce their natural fruits in his character?

It is generally assumed that pain or suffering of some kind is the penalty of sin. It often does bring suffering as its consequence, but that is not always true, and it is by no means the worst consequence of sin. The wages of sin is always death, not always suffering, for spiritual death is often a painless process. It may be accompanied by numbness,—by insensibility. Deterioration, degradation, is the penalty of sin. He that sows to the flesh reaps not always suffering, but always corruption.

There is, indeed, one natural consequence of sin, of which most of us have some knowledge. That is remorse, the rankling memory of wrong committed, which is now, perhaps, remediless; the bitter scourgings of conscience for faithlessness or disloyalty or cruelty or neglect for which it is now beyond our power to atone.

Such then is sin, and such is the penalty of sin. I do not think that there is any man here who will deny either the fact of sin, or the reality of its penalty. And if this is the penalty of sin you will see, of course, that it cannot be borne by any one else in your stead. It consists in the deadly effect of sin upon your own character, and these effects cannot be transferred to the character of another. It is not possible that another should be made selfish and false and foul by your evil

deeds; and if it were possible it surely would not do you any good. *The recognition of the fact that the punishment of sin consists in the natural consequences of sin does away at once and forever with all theories of legal substitution.*

Salvation cannot, therefore, come to you through the infliction upon some one else of penalties or of judicial sufferings deserved by you.

What is more, salvation, in the teachings of the new theology, is not concerned primarily with penalty, but with sin. It does not seek, first, to save men from the consequences of their sins; it seeks to save them from *the sins themselves*. It does not stop with the symptoms; it goes straight to the seat of the disease.

Let us bring this down from the realm of generalities and abstractions to ourselves,—to the men and women here before me. If sin is what we have said that it is you are not going to deny that you are sinners. Nor can you deny that sin has brought into your lives and into the society in which you move, just such consequences as we have been considering. I have spoken of salvation from sin. Do you want to be saved from sin? Do you want to get rid of the selfishness which makes you so often push your own interests at the expense of other people, or in disregard of their welfare and happiness,—the selfishness which makes you greedy and envious and proud and exclusive; the selfishness which gives rein to your appetites and passions, and leads you to play fast and loose with truth, and instigates you to the cowardice that shirks responsibility, and the infidelity which denies your highest obligations?

Is it not a thoroughly bad principle of life? Is it not causing you shame and sorrow and the loss of self-respect and weariness and trouble every day? Wouldn't you like to get rid of it, and to get a new principle of life implanted in your heart, the principle of good will, the principle of loyalty, the principle of service; to have it as the ruling motive of your life to glorify God on this earth and to do good to men as you have opportunity? That would be salvation. He who has learned to love God who is the Perfect Goodness and Truth, with the highest love of his heart, and to love his neighbor as himself, is a saved man, no matter what creed he may profess nor what language he may speak.

And how shall we learn this lesson of love? How shall we cure this morbid tendency to make ourselves the center of the world in which we move?

The Scripture tells us that the way to be saved from this sin of selfishness is to repent and be converted,—or as the new version puts it, to repent and turn again. What is meant by this word repent? It means, primarily, "Change your mind." Get a new idea of what life means. The trouble with this world lying in wickedness is that the people think the way to happiness is the way of self-seeking; that each man gets the good of life by discriminating his own interest from the interests of his fellow men, and pursuing his own interest, either at their expense or in indifference to them. That is the ruling idea of the street and the mart and the caucus. Men are selfish because they think that selfishness is the best policy,—that it is the way to find the satisfactions of life. That is absolutely false; it is

the way to miss them, to lose them. The first thing that any man needs, therefore, is to change his mind — to get rid of this idea, and replace it by another. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he, and it is futile to try to save a man from the sin of selfishness, so long as he thinks that selfishness is the way of life and happiness. So the first word of Jesus is this word Repent. Change your mind!

But how shall his mind be changed? The answer to that question is the next word of our Gospel. Believe. Believe Christ. This is the first thing to do. Instead of saying believe in Christ or believe on Him, or believe something about him, which suggests theological formularies not easy of comprehension, I would begin by saying, Believe him. This is a perfectly simple thing to do. Believe what he tells you about the meaning of life. Believe what he has said in the Sermon on the Mount. Believe that the Golden Rule is the right rule to live by every day and everywhere. If you will believe this you will be in a fair way to get rid of your selfishness.

The trouble with most of us is that we do not believe it. We do not regard it as practical. So a great many of us are content with believing *in him* as a legal substitute, and comforting ourselves with the assurance that by thus believing our sins are forgiven; putting aside these searching sayings of his by which He seeks to guide us away from selfishness which is death, to love which is life.

Some of you are sure that Christ has saved you from your sins, but your lives clearly show that you do

not believe his words. Now, the sin from which you need to be saved is selfishness; and how can He save you from selfishness so long as in the bottom of your heart you believe that the way of selfishness is the best way—the best way for you. The very beginning of salvation, I say, is the change of mind by which you come to see and realize that the way of Christ, which is the way of unselfishness, is the right way for you to live.

The one thing which the new theology makes central is believing Christ. It insists that his words are the words of life, that his truth is the bread of life, that his way is the way of life. It maintains that it is rational to believe him, that he is worthy of our confidence, that he has won for himself a name that is above every name, and that he has won it not by pleasing himself, or serving himself, but by living the life which he enjoins, and sealing his testimony by his death; and that when he tells us that the way of love is the way of life he speaks with authority. The one thing that this world lying in wickedness needs to-day is just to believe this, to believe what he says.

Suppose that all the people in Columbus could be brought to see that what Jesus says about life is true; that the right way to regard one another is not as competitors or rivals or opponents, but as friends and brothers. Suppose that all employers and all employees, all traders and customers, all landlords and tenants, all lenders and borrowers, all officers of the commonwealth, all citizens of the commonwealth, all husbands and wives, all parents and children, all human beings in every social relation, could have brought home to them

the truth which Jesus has taught us about the right way of living together, should we not see a great river of salvation flowing through the streets of this city? Should we not behold a new Columbus coming down out of heaven from God?

Well, if believing Christ would bring salvation to all of us, it would bring it, not less surely, to every one of us; and it will come to all of us, only when every one of us accepts it for himself and enters into the joy of it.

It is certain that when we had thus believed Christ and had begun to live by his word, we should want to know more about him. To one who had given you a new revelation of the meaning of life you would feel profoundly grateful, and you would desire to be better acquainted with him. He is not here in the flesh, but that is just as well; as Paul says, we have the mind of Christ; in the four gospels it is revealed with wonderful clearness. If you will take these four gospels and live with them a year or two, studying them every day, pondering the words of this great Teacher and letting their deep meanings sink into your soul, watching him as he meets the emergencies that arise in his life, trying to get into your mind the real significance of his life and character, you will find that some strange and happy changes are taking place in the central motives of your life.

For we all know that he has done more—a thousand times more—than any one else who ever lived in the world toward getting the idea and the spirit of unselfish service into the hearts and lives of men. The

most and the best that the world knows about the unselfish life it has learned from him. If you really want to get rid of that old, bad, selfish temper and to get the new life of love into your heart, the best thing you can do is to get acquainted with him.

It would hasten this result, no doubt, if you should try to find some kind of work to do like that which occupied him while he was here; you would understand him better; you would get acquainted with him faster if you were working along the same lines that he was following here among men.

Thus through believing his word, and abiding in his truth, and sharing his life, we shall be brought into fellowship with the Father whose life he shares and whose love he reveals. Whoso enters into that great Friendship has passed from death unto life, from the death of selfishness to the life of service. This is his own word.

This is salvation through Jesus Christ. He shows us the way of life; by his great self-sacrifice he wins our confidence, and we become partakers of his spirit; through Him we come to know the true God and eternal life.

Sin is selfishness. We are saved from that sin by believing the word of Jesus that love is life; by receiving his life, through fellowship with Him; by following him in the way of service.

This may seem an elementary account of a great matter; simple it is, as all the greatest truths are; but it is not a light thing. What would happen if the Church of God should heartily accept this truth about

the nature of sin, and this truth about the meaning of salvation? What manner of community should we be living in, if all the people who are numbered among the saved were saved after this plan of salvation? "What customs," asks Dr. Clarke, "would society take up if it were to undertake living according to the Golden Rule and the law of neighbor love? What new ranges of personal action would be opened? What new methods in the field of business? What new modes of neighborly association? What new and wiser forms of help? * * * What would the Golden Rule and the law of neighbor love, and the sense of human value make of the present system of competition? How would they work among nations? What would they do with war? * * * "What would happen to-day if society were transformed into the Kingdom of God through adoption of Jesus' spirit of self-sacrificing helpfulness as the spirit of all life? What awakenings would there be? What age-long neglects would cease? What unexpected recognitions would occur? What mighty inspirations of service would take possession of powers long indolent or turned to selfishness? What great new works of fellowship and helpfulness would be undertaken and carried through? * * * What will this passion of the cross be when it becomes a power and runs through the world? Against what will it blaze as wrath? What tyrannies and injustices will it burn up? Into what forms of loving service will it throw itself as life? How long could a thousand disgraces last if the self-giving spirit of Jesus had free course, inspiring men to take up the cross and follow him? How long could

any one think that God was unrevealed or had forsaken the earth? How long could humanity resist the warm tide of blessing that came flooding in? How long could the Kingdom of Heaven be delayed? Nay, the Kingdom would have come in power!" *

* The Ideal of Jesus, pp. —

V.

HEAVEN AND HELL.

(91)

Have ye not still my witness
Within yourselves alway,
My hand that on the keys of life
For bliss or bale I lay?

"Still, in perpetual judgment
I hold assize within,
With sure reward of holiness,
And dread rebuke of sin.

"My Gerizim and Ebal
Are in each human soul,
The still small voice of blessing,
And Sinai's thunder roll.

"The stern behest of duty,
The doom-book open thrown,
The heaven ye seek, the hell ye fear,
Are with yourselves alone."

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

V.

HEAVEN AND HELL.

I ONCE heard a certain popular preacher say that no one knew anything about heaven or hell, except what he had learned from the Bible; that there was absolutely no other source of information or knowledge upon either subject. It was an amazing statement to be made by one who assumed to be a guide in spiritual things, and sharply recalled the Lord's saying: "If the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch." What the preacher was talking about, of course, was those traditional places or localities known as heaven and hell. But about such localities the Bible gives us no information. Most of what this preacher knew of the topography of heaven and hell he had probably learned not from the Bible but from Milton's "Paradise Lost." I do not think that he was familiar with Dante's great poem. Those symbolical visions of the Apocalypse are not descriptive of heaven; the picture of the Great White Throne and the rainbow round it, and thunderings and lightning issuing from beneath it, and the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, full of eyes round about and within,—one with the face of a calf and one of a lion and one of a man and one of an eagle,—all this is not, I dare say, by any intelligent person, supposed to be a description of any part of the scenery of heaven. These are the

merest symbolisms; precisely what they are intended to typify we may not know, but we are sure that they are not realistic representations of anything visible in heaven. Nor is the figure of a lake of fire and brimstone by any fairly sane person at the present day supposed to be a literal description of hell. At least I do not know of any living teacher, orthodox or heterodox, who has the least reputation for intelligence, not to say scholarship, who takes this view of it. How it may be with Brother Jasper, of Richmond, I do not know; I suppose that he accepts the literal interpretation. But there cannot be any considerable number of fairly intelligent reading people in the world today who really accept it. All these Apocalyptic representations are known to be figurative.

Perhaps I am speaking too confidently about the intelligence of this generation. One does meet, now and then, with astonishing exhibitions of ignorance on the part of persons who are supposed to be educated, especially as it concerns matters of religion. I think that the average newspaper reporter still supposes that hell is a burning pit, and when he hears any one saying that he does not believe in such a place of torment, he makes haste to report him as having ceased to believe in hell. Quite a flurry was caused by such a report, not long ago, of something said by certain Sunday school teachers in Washington. Newspaper reports of theological opinions are always to be taken with many grains of salt. When a few years ago Dr. Abbott said that the conception of God as a venerable man, with gray hairs, seated on a white throne, could not be entertained, and that the at-

tribution to him of hands and feet and eyes must be understood symbolically, the newspapers immediately published him all over the country as having ceased to believe in the personality of God. It was, of course, impossible for the reporters to conceive of a personality which was not represented by a human form and figure.

Still I think it must be true that most of those to whom I am speaking are aware that these terms of the book of visions are symbols and not descriptions.

The pictures of the New Jerusalem in the last chapters of the Revelation, undoubtedly refer to the future glory of this earth. The New Jerusalem of that vision was seen coming down from heaven to earth. And there is no attempt in any other part of that book to show us anything about the external or physical features of the blessed life. In no other portion of the Bible is there any such description.

That we shall live somewhere in space is highly probable. At any rate it is impossible for us to conceive of existence — personal existence — existence which possesses power of communication, which is not in some form; and form must occupy space; form is limited space. Tennyson, in thinking of his friend who had gone on to the life beyond, and of the theory that each is re-absorbed at death into the "general Soul," cries out that this

"Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside,
And I shall know him when we meet."

This belief is in accordance with all our experience. Any other condition of personal existence is inconceivable. That the life to come must be a life connected with place is a necessary assumption. But the essential fact about it will not be the locality, the surroundings, the environment. * Heaven is not limited to any place in this life or the next; it has no boundaries. It is not place that makes happiness or misery. That is not true of life anywhere. Too many unhappy human beings think so. About half of the people whom I know suppose that their discomfort and restlessness is due to their location; that if they were somewhere else it would be well with them. But the accident of place has very little to do with the real good of life. That which makes heaven heaven, that which makes hell hell, is not the scenery, or the climate, or the circumstances, but what is in the heart of the man. The reality of it, the substance of it, is not physical but spiritual. The essential facts of heaven and hell are facts which are not revealed through the senses, and which cannot be shown on a map or described in any words, — even sacred words. They can never be known except by the spirit. They are spiritual things and can only be spiritually discerned. The essential elements of heaven and of hell are in every man's heart, in every man's life. He no more needs a book to put him in possession of it than he needs a book to initiate him into the mysteries of love or of despair.

Faith, Paul says, gives us the substance of the things we hope for. If heaven is the completion and crown of our hopes faith gives us the substance of heaven. Not

the shadow of it, the symbol of it, the strong assurance of it, merely, but the substance of it.

If faith gives us life, it must give us the blessedness of life. You cannot have the wave without the spray, the peach without the bloom, the summer without the fragrance and the song. The one is the effluence of the other. Now the one gift which is promised by Christ to those who follow him is life. With him they enter into life. In him was life and the life was the light of men. He that hath the Son *hath* life. His is not merely the promise of it, the assurance of it, it is the present possession of it. *This is life eternal* that they believe on thee, the only true God, and on Jesus Christ his Son whom thou hast sent. If a genuine discipleship with Jesus Christ puts any man in possession of life, — of what the apostle calls life indeed, — of what Jesus himself describes as eternal life, must not the substance of what we call heaven belong to him even now? And must not his knowledge of it be immediate, certain, personal?

We must not too lightly speak all those wonderful words of Jesus about the kingdom of heaven. It was the gospel of that kingdom that he came preaching. The first word of public discourse that he ever spoke, so far as we know, was this: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for *theirs is the Kingdom of heaven!*" All that he said about it seems to imply that it is here on the earth. "Neither shall we say lo, here! or lo, there! for behold the Kingdom of God — (the phrase is used alternately with the Kingdom of heaven) is *within* you." The proposition has a pregnant meaning; it signifies *in* you, individ-

ually, as a spiritual force, and *among* you, collectively, as a social law. It is here—that is the idea. And where the Kingdom of heaven is, the substance of heaven must be. It *is* here—in how many hearts, in how many homes, in how many groups of loving children of our Father who have learned Christ's law and are living by it? The man who knows nothing about heaven except what the Bible tells him, must have been a hermit, and a sour-hearted one at that. He needs to be born again, in order that he may *see* the Kingdom of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, whose goodly palaces shine on every side of him, whose trees of life are growing in many an Earthly Paradise. The man to whom nothing of heaven is visible in this world will never see heaven in any world, until he is changed, until his eyes are opened.

What then is heaven? There are many different terms in which we may describe it, all of which, when carefully interpreted, amount to the same thing. I will not puzzle you with multiplying and reconciling them; let me give you one which is, perhaps, as comprehensive as any. Heaven is harmony with God. To experience the substance of heaven is to feel that we are in fellowship and communion with the Father of our Spirits, with the Infinite Source of law and love.

If you will recall the suggestions of the heavenly life that the Bible gives us you will remember that this thought of unity with God, of friendship with God, is always present. Our Lord's words to his disciples in his last conversation with them lay much emphasis upon these thoughts that we are to be with God, to dwell in his presence, to abide in his love. It is in the Father's

house he tells us, that we are to dwell with him; there are many mansions in that dwelling; he is going before us to prepare a place for us, and he will meet us and welcome us to that eternal home, that where he is we may be also. The companionship implies the spiritual harmony. Only those can bear to dwell together who are one in mind and heart. What makes the home is not furniture and upholstery but the essential unity in feeling and purpose of those who dwell within it. The fundamental implication of all that is said in the Bible about the heavenly life, is this condition of essential oneness with God. It is a condition in which God's thought rules our thinking, in which his purpose concerning us is the law of our conduct, in which we join with the poet, in his sublime prayer:

"Our wills are ours, we know not how,
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

It is this condition, I suppose, that Paul is describing when he speaks of possessing the mind of the spirit, the mind that is pervaded and controlled by the truth and the love of the spirit. That the spirit of man is made to be filled and illumined by the divine spirit is just as true as that the eye is made for sight or the ear for sound. If there is perfect wisdom, perfect truth, perfect love in the universe, we know that our spirits ought to be and may be in touch with all that divineness.

We could not, if we would, convince ourselves that a Power and a Goodness like that were foreign to our spirits, or inaccessible to them. There are instincts and aspirations in our souls that testify, more strongly than

any words, that that kind of fellowship is ours by birth-right. "The spirit beareth witness to our spirits that we are the children of God." "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." This is the life for which we are made, this life of communion and fellowship with God. This is life indeed. Until we have realized this, in some degree, we do not know the meaning of life. The mind of the Spirit is life. And whoever has entered into this relation with the Father of his spirit has begun to live the heavenly life. What his surroundings may be matters little, nor what may be his possession or his prospects for this world; the man who knows that he is one with God has within himself the assurance and the foretaste of the life eternal. His soul is dwelling in a sweet serenity that no shocks of trouble can disturb. Neither life nor death, nor things present nor things to come can separate him from the love of God.

And not only is he at peace with himself and with his God; he must also be at peace with all his fellows, or if between himself and them there is any lack of harmony, it is because they are out of harmony with God. It is evident, indeed, that in a world as disordered by selfishness and sin as this world now is, there cannot be perfect peace. Jesus himself once said, "I came not to bring peace but a sword." "Blessed are ye," he cries, "when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." The full value of that beatitude we are sometimes, in our impatience, slow to accept. Those who stand with him in their fidelity to his truth, must sometimes share

with him the spite and malignity of selfish men, the buffet and the scourge and the crown of thorns. The social peace of heaven may often be imperfectly realized in this world. In the heart of him who has the mind of the spirit there is peace, and he is one of the sons of peace; the spirit of peace is with him, the wish and the longing to be at one with all men; but he knows that there can be no enduring peace without righteousness; and he will never sacrifice righteousness for peace; he does not forget the command to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. But when all men possess the same mind, then there will be peace on earth. When all men are one with God in his thought concerning themselves and their fellows, then there will be perfect peace. Minds that agree with the Perfect Mind must agree with one another. Clocks that tally with the regulator strike the hour in unison. Instruments that are tuned up to concert pitch can join in the symphony. Hearts that beat responsive to the love of heaven will make harmony on the earth. When all men have the mind of the spirit, white-winged peace will descend and abide with us. It is evident that when each of us is thinking God's thought concerning his brother, there can be no discord among us, but only the most joyful ministry of sympathy and service. The society organized upon that basis will be heaven. Where it will be is an irrelevant and childish question.

And now what is it we mean when we speak that awful word which is always coupled with heaven as its antithesis? I think that as the substance of heaven is harmony with God so the substance of hell is alienation

from and enmity against God. And as the condition which Paul calls the mind of the spirit is unity with God, so the condition which he describes as the mind of the flesh is opposition to him. Those two tendencies in man of which Paul speaks so strongly in the seventh chapter of the Romans, the law of the mind or spirit and the law of the members, are the beginnings of heaven and hell. There are impulses within us which we distinguish as better and worse; those which lift us toward truth, purity, love, honor, integrity, those which pull us down toward base self-indulgence, and falsity and dishonor and uncleanness, and degradation. Now, if we have any immediate and certain knowledge of God we know him as the prompter and inspirer and refiner of these higher impulses. When these speak within us it is God that is speaking; it is his Spirit witnessing to our spirits that we are his children and summoning us to cleanse our thoughts. And when we stifle these higher voices, and yield to the solicitation of our baser nature, as we have the power to do, we are fighting against God. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. Every one of you knows what it is to have this conflict in the heart between the higher and the lower nature, between the impulses which you know to be the best part of you, and the impulses which you know to be the worst part of you. And every one of you knows what it is to yield to the baser nature, to sink down to a lower plane of thought and action. Now, Paul says that the mind of the flesh is not only enmity against God, he says also that it is death. Of course, what he means is spiritual death. If our spiritual life depends upon union and

fellowship with God, then separation and opposition to him must mean spiritual death. The branch, separated from the vine, withers and perishes. This is spiritual death, the decay of the better and nobler powers, the strengthening of the baser tendencies, the gravitation of the soul toward brutishness.

Of course, the soul that is under the dominion of its own worse passions cannot be at peace; it must be always at strife within itself, it is its own worst enemy and knows it; the law of the members is bringing it into a degrading servitude, and the chains are galling. Most of you, I dare say, know something about this. The restlessness, the shame, the irritation, the sense of degradation, which are the inevitable consequences of conduct which you know to be wrong, which violates your own ideals of manliness or womanliness, — you know what it is. This is the beginning of hell. This is the substance of hell. Multiply this, increase it, till it comes to occupy your mind, till it fills, like a cloudy pall, the whole firmament of your thought, and you will know what is the doom of the transgressor. I have known more than one man in my life to whom this torment had already become no light matter; who needed no revelation to convince him of the reality of hell.

But even as the felicity of the heavenly life cannot be wholly realized by any solitary saint, because it is in our social relations that life and happiness are perfected, so the full misery of the life of doom cannot be tasted, until the bad soul finds itself incorporated into a bad society, wherein all like itself are self-centered, egotistic, brutal, each pursuing his own base gratifications with

utter disregard for the welfare of all the rest ; all using one another as the instruments of greed and unrighteousness, and grovelling desires. The hate, the envy, the jealousy, the cynicism of such an aggregation — for I will not call it a society — can be clearly conceived. You might say that such people would not stay together ; that their tempers would drive them apart, into isolation, and that seems probable, on a superficial view ; but I apprehend that they would be impelled, by a kind of fatality, to congregate. Even misery loves company, and the cohesive power of mutual plunder would hurl them together.

Add this ingredient of chronic malevolence and antipathy, with the reaction of bitterness which it evidently entails, to the shame and remorse of the soul that is sinking by the weight of its own evil doing, — and you have a condition whose horror I will not try to characterize.

I should like to give you one or two pictures of a soul in hell. I will not go to Milton or to Dante to find them ; what they show us is too largely symbolic ; I would rather give you the bare reality. You remember, some of you, John Barclay, in William Allen White's story of "A Certain Rich Man." I will not stop to explain ; if you have not read the story you will get some sense of the meaning :

"Day after day, until the days and nights became a week, and the week repeated itself until nearly a month was gone, John Barclay, dry-eyed and all but dumb, paced the terrace before his house by night, and by day roamed through the noisy mill or wandered through the

desolate house seeking peace that would not come to him. The whole foundation of his scheme of life was crumbling beneath him. He had built thirty-five years of his manhood on the theory that the human brain is the god of things as they are and as they must be. The structure of his life was an imposing edifice and men called it great and successful. Yet as he walked his lonely way in those black days that followed Jane's death, there came into his consciousness a strong, overmastering conviction which he dared not accept, that his house was built on sand. For here were things outside of his plans, outside of his very beliefs, coming into his life, bringing calamity, sorrow and tragedy with them into his own circle of friends, into his own household, into his own heart. As he walked through the dull, lonely house, he could not escape the vague feeling, though he fought it as one mad fights for his delusion, that all the tragedies piling up about him came from his own mistakes. Over and over again he threshed out the past. Molly Brownwell's cry, 'You have sold me into bondage, John Barclay,' would not be stilled, though at times he could smile at it; and the broken body and shamed face of her father haunted him, like an obsession. Night after night when he tried to sleep, Robert Hendricks' letter burned in fire before his eyes, and at last, so mad was the struggle in his soul, that he hugged these to him, that he might escape the greater horror—the dreadful red head-lines in the sensational paper they had sent him from the city office which screamed at him: 'John Barclay slays his wife—Aids a water-

franchise grab that feeds the people typhoid fever germs, and his own wife dies of the fever.' He had burned the paper but the headlines were seared into his brain.

"Over and over he climbed the fiery ladder of his sins; the death of General Hendricks, the sacrifice of Molly Culpepper, the temptation and fall of his father, the death of his boyhood's friend, and then the headlines. These things were laid at his door, and over and over again, like Sisyphus rolling the stones up hill, he swept them away from his threshold, only to find that they rolled right back again. And with them came at times the suspicion that his daughter's unhappiness was upon him also. And besides these things, a hundred business transactions wherein he had cheated and lied for money rose to disturb him. And through it all, through his anguish and shame, the faith of his life [his faith in the supremacy of self] kept battling for its dominion."

John Barclay was in hell, no doubt about that. Right there in that stately and sumptuous home of his, with all the comforts that could be had for money, able to buy a railroad a thousand miles long the next day, his name an open sesame in all the banks in the country, he was in hell, a deeper and a hotter hell than Milton ever saw or Dante ever dreamed.

And there are hundreds of thousands of other people in this country today, not in the story books, but in the counting rooms and the offices and the parlors, in the theaters, on the race-tracks, at the watering places, in the shops, in the schools, who are in hell — not just such a hell as John Barclay's, for each man digs his

own, and furnishes the fuel for its fires — but a hell whose torments need no re-enforcements of fire and brimstone.

Then there are the reactions which arise out of the perversion of our social nature. Bad men make a bad society, and the more there are of them the worse are the discords and confusions. By the supposition each is bent on getting all he can for himself; every other man is a rival and an enemy. In such an aggregation there can be nothing but strife and scathe and havoc.

Milton's picture of the conference of the devils in the bottomless pit is utterly at war with psychology. He represents them as holding together by a kind of despairing loyalty, as even exhibiting some large magnanimities in their dealings with each other. The comment has often been made upon *Paradise Lost* that Satan is represented in it as possessing many admirable qualities. And after this conclave of the demons results in a unanimous decision respecting the policy of the lost souls the poet thus moralizes:

“O shame to men! Devil with devil damned
Firm concord holds; men only disagree
Of creatures rational, though under hope
Of heavenly grace; and, God proclaiming peace,
Yet live in hatred, enmity and strife
Among themselves, and levy cruel wars
Wasting the earth, each other to destroy.”

But it is only Milton's devils who behave like this; the real ones, all those in whom selfishness has done its perfect work, are quite unable to establish among themselves such “firm concord.” The very principle of their

life is antagonism, and its fruit can be nothing but bitterness and wrath and misery.

It would be hard to find any group of human beings among whom the spirit that makes hell holds undivided sway, but sometimes we find social conditions which give us a glimpse of dire possibilities. Such a company as Mr. Jerome gets together in his story and play, "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," suggests to us the kind of thing which might come to pass when unrelieved egoism was the only law of life.

We see, also, sometimes, in the strife of classes, symptoms of what might be, if every man's hand was always against his neighbor. In a strike, for example, the bitterness, the hatred, the sinister tempers that find expression in brutal and revolting deeds, give us some inkling of hell. It is far from being an adequate representation, for here are groups bound together by firm loyalties, and there is much of tenderness and truth and self-denying love; but the violent rupture of even one relation by the operation of self-will gives an intimation of what chaos would result if all social relations were thus torn asunder.

But heaven, let us not forget, is a reality as concrete and as substantial as hell. If there are many who could say with Satan,

"Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell,"

there are many others who bear about in their hearts, often, if not always, the peace, the serenity, the blessedness of heaven. There have been some known to all of us upon whom has descended the spirit which brings

heaven to earth; whose lives give proof that their prayer, which they have been wont to pray, has been answered:

“I ask thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And to wipe the weeping eyes,
And a heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathize.”

Our best proof of a future heaven is in the lives of some that we have known upon the earth. To such life, we feel, belongs the glory of going on.

“All those clear souls whose shining face
Made beauty whensoever they came,
Hearts full of tenderest love and grace
For truth and right a glorious flame,
And those whom beauty’s perfect round
Enticed away with glowing heart,—
Or who in lowly service found
With silent joy the better part—”

when we think of them we cannot call them dead; we say of them in our hearts what Peter said of his Master: it is not possible that such life should be holden of death. The substance of heaven, the brightness and glory of heaven shone upon our path when they were walking by our side.

And not only have we seen the light of heaven shining from the faces of our neighbors, we have seen its soft radiance diffused in companies and groups that dwelt together in unity, in the spirit of mutual helpfulness, bearing one another’s burdens, “having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing

through faction or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind each counting others better than himself; not looking each to his own things only, but each also to the things of others." Every one of us knows of homes, pervaded by this life; and sometimes when we are sojourning in them we think of the words of Jesus, "In my Father's house are many mansions," and say to ourselves with swelling hearts: "Yes, thank God! and here is one of them. The substance of heaven is here. There will be nothing better than this, anywhere."

You will all admit that the essential heaven and the essential hell which I have been trying to show you are not fables nor imaginations; that they are realities just as certain as the multiplication table. The fact that the mind that is in harmony with God, and that is steadily bent on realizing its own highest impulses is at peace with itself, at peace with the world, and at peace with God; and that a society composed of such minds would be Paradise regained — this is not a vision out of a book; you know enough of human nature to know that this must be. The world and man are made to find perfection and blessedness in such life as this. And they are made so that the refusal of this life must bring degradation and misery to the soul and anarchy and chaos to society. This is the nature of things. It requires no forensic trial, no literal judgment bar, no ranging of the sheep and the goats, no stern decree; that is a parable and it is very instructive, if we take it for a parable; but the everlasting fact is that the issues of every day are in themselves decisive; and it is our own choices, our own actions that send us, unerringly to the right

hand or to the left. Heaven and hell are already begun in us; in many of us they are contending for the mastery, and it seems not certain yet with all of us whether the angels or the demons will win. The only sure thing about it is that the realm belongs to the angels; the demons are usurping powers. It is the divine elements in our constitution that are the native elements; it is with these that the Father of spirits seeks to join himself for our deliverance, and yet we often weakly and wickedly surrender to the baser elements; the demons gain the victory for a season, at least, and the principalities and powers of darkness set up their dominions in our lives. So it is that in many lives the powers of hell are struggling with the powers of heaven. Here within the microcosm of the individual soul, the substance of the heaven that all holy souls are longing and striving for, and the substance of the hell that all generous natures fear and dread stand revealed to consciousness; and the glory of the one allures us, and the woe of the other warns us. There is not one of us who does not know something of both; not one to whom the freedom and the beauty and the immortal vigor of that upper realm has not sometimes been shown in ravishing vision; not one who has not felt the whips and scorpions and the clanking chains of that nether world.

One or the other of these tendencies will have the mastery, sooner or later, in your life and mine. Do you remember what Mr. Lincoln said in that first great speech of his, in the State Capitol at Springfield, at the opening of his debate with Douglas? "‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government

cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the union to be dissolved, — I do not expect the house to fall — but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all slave or all free.” That is just as true of your life and mine. It cannot endure, permanently, in a condition of mortal conflict between the good and the evil. One side or the other will win. The conflict will go on, until the good or the evil is victorious. When will that issue be decided? I do not know. There are those who say that it must be decided one way or the other before death, but there is no clear Scripture for that, and I am not prepared to affirm it. I do not know but that it is practically decided for a good many before death; that is to say, the one or the other tendency has grown so strong that it is morally certain to persist. I know a good many men and women who seem to me so established in goodness that no influence strong enough to shake them is likely to assail them. And I know some who are so thoroughly entrenched in greed, in miserhood, in animalism, that there seems to be little hops of rescuing them. This is the sublime and inspiring fact — the awful and forbidding fact — that character tends to permanence. One way or the other it will go, more and more strongly, with every one of us; one way or the other, by and by, it will stay!

Do I mean to say that there will be an endless division in the world to come between the evil and the good? No, I do not believe that. I do not believe that evil can be permanent. I do not believe that there will be everlasting rebellion against God in the universe. I

do not believe that suffering and misery and sin are endless. In an everlasting fire I do believe — in the thing which that symbolizes, — a fire that consumes iniquity; that is part of the nature of God; our God is a consuming fire; it is part of the nature of things; but the time will come when there will be no food for that flame, when Death and Hell themselves shall be cast into the lake of fire. The glory of going on belongs to goodness; it does not belong to evil. The tendency of sin is to the diminution of being. Sin — the violation of the law of the organism — always lessens life, reduces power, tends to dissolution. I believe that persistent sin must finally result in the extinction of being. This law of the universe is the consuming fire in which all the evil of the universe will at last be destroyed.

The laws of retribution are from everlasting; they must be, if God is love; for he loves us too well to let us be comfortable and happy in sin; but evil is in its nature temporary and mortal, and the victory of good will at last be complete and eternal.

How this shall be is not, to my mind, entirely clear. It must come about in one of two ways.

Evil may come to an end through the final restoration to virtue of all wandering and sinning souls, or it may cease through the sinking into non-existence of the disobedient and the incorrigible. I hope for the recovery of all; with Tennyson I cry:

“O yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt and taints of blood;

"That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete."

But the law which we have found in operation, that sin brings not only suffering, but diminution of being; that the violation by any organism of its organic law means the impairment of its life, and that a continuation of such violation must mean the extinction of life,—makes it impossible for me to dogmatize. It looks as though it might be possible for the soul to commit slow suicide. But this is a dreadful thought; I cannot entertain it without raising troublesome questions about the divine administration. Therefore, I cannot dogmatize about this. The only thing of which I feel sure is that "good will be the final goal of ill;" that either through the final reclamation of all, or through the fading into nothingness of the incorrigible, rebellion and misery will disappear from the universe; that if there shall be any whom infinite love cannot restore, they will sink into painless silence and oblivion; that, in Milton's great words:

"Leprous sin will melt from earthly mould,
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day."

Let me sum up, now, in brief paragraphs, a few of the things which it may be well for us to remember, about heaven and hell.

First, then, it should be clear to us that the descriptions in the Bible about which our thoughts have been

wont to gather are not topographical. Heaven is not a city fifteen hundred miles long, fifteen hundred miles wide and fifteen hundred miles high, with streets of gold and whole pearls for gates. Hell is not a lake of fire and brimstone. These are not descriptions, they are symbols.

Heaven and hell are not, primarily, places, they are states of character.

They are not confined to the other side of death; they are here and now.

They are not figures of speech; they are present realities of human experience. Where good will rules there is heaven; where selfishness is regnant there is hell. Good will and selfishness are not figures of speech; they are realities, as well known to us as hunger and cold, as hope and fear.

If you never know anything of heaven before you die, it may take you a good while to find it after death; for heaven must be begun in you before you can enter into it.

Death is not regeneration. There is no magic in the article of death by which some are changed to angels and others to demons. Unquestionably many of us are looking for some such sudden transformation of character. I know no reason for expecting any such thing. Probably we shall enter upon the next life with about the same outfit of habit and motive and tendency as that with which we leave this life. Probably we shall go, as the Scripture says, each to his own place; that is, we shall find the associations and occupations that are congenial. If we have learned to live the heavenly life

here — the life whose ruling motive is friendship with God and men — we shall go on living it there; if we have been living in this world the self-centered life, the life which produces hell, we shall continue to live that life in the next world and shall find such employments and associations as naturally gather about that kind of life. We live that kind of life here because we think it is the best kind of life; we shall go on living it there for the same reason.

No one lives in hell, in this world, unless he prefers it. The invitations to the heavenly life are always sounding in his ears; it is always possible for him to choose the life of good-will; why does he not choose it? Because he does not believe the word of Jesus. He thinks that "Every man for himself" is a better rule, for him, than the Golden Rule. To follow in the way of Jesus might involve some heavy sacrifice of things that he does not wish to part with.

John Barclay got out of hell by burning in his grate seventy millions of bonds, all fictitious capital, whose possession enabled him to levy tribute on the labor of a continent, whose cancellation lifted a heavy burden from the shoulders of the men who toil. It was a great act of restitution. It was the crucifixion of his selfishness. It broke the chains of a deadly bondage. It let him out into the liberty with which Christ makes men free.

Would you have paid that price to get out of hell? Would you have sacrificed an annual income of three or four millions of dollars, and gone back to the task of daily labor to save your soul from the torment and the

degradation which he was suffering? Many people wouldn't. They would keep the money, "to do good with," probably. They would stifle the cries of remorse. They would smother the sense of shame and humiliation. Thereafter, the reactions of their moral nature against conscious injustice would grow feebler. Gradually their consciences would be seared as with a hot iron. They would sink from that hell where remorse scorches to that deeper hell where conscience is paralyzed, and men have learned to say, "Evil be thou my good!"

The people who stay in hell, this side the grave, are not shut in. There is no prison house in which they are confined. I do not believe that there is any prison house on the other side of the grave, into which God shuts men. Hell, in every feature and phase of it, in this world and in all worlds, is the natural consequence of our own conduct, the natural fruit of our own doings. We dig the pit, we forge the chains, we kindle the fires.

If this is true, some of you are saying, we can escape from it whenever we will. Can you? Why doesn't the drunkard break from his bondage? It isn't God's will that enslaves him. Why doesn't the miser climb out of his sordid pit? God isn't holding him down.

"Though God be good and free be heaven,
No force divine can love compel,
And though the song of sins forgiven
May sound through lowest hell,

"The sweet persuasion of His voice
Respects thy sanctity of will;
He giveth day: thou hast thy choice
To walk in darkness still.

"No word of doom may shut thee out,
No wind of wrath may downward whirl,
No sword of fire keep watch about
The open gates of pearl:

"Forever round the mercy seat
The guiding lights of love may burn;
But what if, habit bound, thy feet
Shall lack the will to turn?

"What if thine eye refuse to see,
Thine ear of Heaven's free welcome fail,
And thou a willing captive be,
Thyself thy own dark jail?

"O doom beyond the saddest guess,
As the long years of God unroll,
To make thy dreary selfishness
The prison of a soul!"

That is the only power that enslaves souls, in any world. God is not their jailer. And what multitudes spend their lives in weaving the toils of selfishness and sordid habit and vicious indulgence with which their own wills are bound, until their wills are impotent. They can escape, if they will, but where is the will?

This is the substance of what the present day theology has to say about hell. It is somewhat less lurid than some representations you have heard; is it any less convincing?

But let us not forget that while it makes hell very near and very real, it brings heaven also to the threshold of our choice. Its word to all the children of men is the word of the great apostle, "Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend up into heaven? or who shall descend into

the abyss? the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." All that makes heaven dear is

"Closer to us than breathing and nearer than hands or feet."

The poet says that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy;" yes, and if we keep the simple faith of little children it never goes away from us. What is it that he saith? "If a man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." How far away will heaven be when that happens? O how puny and crippled is the faith that shuts heaven out of the days when we need it most, and out of the places that are aching for its peace and rest! If any man asks you the way to heaven show him his own front door. That is the likeliest place in the universe to look for it, and if he will search for it with all his heart he will find it there.

What is that prayer we are always praying: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Do you mean anything by that prayer when you pray it? What else can you mean but that heaven is coming to earth? The Revelator saw, in his vision, the answer to that prayer, the Holy City descending out of heaven from God to fill the earth. It is coming; it is coming every day, but not so fast as we could wish. What delays its coming? Nothing but the selfishness of human hearts. Nothing but our lack of faith in the word of Jesus. Just as soon as the children of men can learn to believe that the way of love is the way of life heaven will be here.

The thing we have been praying for will come to pass one of these days, for men will begin to believe in it and look for it. People will be living in heaven right here in the Scioto Valley. Not in palaces, but in beautiful homes; not within walls but on streets that stretch away into sweet fields, and link earth's plenty with man's need. The pavements will not be golden, but they will be clean and whole, and the river of life will be our own river, flowing not past prison walls, but through green groves and flowers, with trees of life on either side, and children playing in the sunshine. It will be lighted, too, with a radiance which will make our clusters pale, for the glory of God will lighten it, and the lamp thereof will be the Lamb. God's great love, which is the greater glory, will be the law of its life; and the gentleness and peace of Christ will abide in all its assemblies. All this is coming, one of these days, to the place where we stand, to the city where we live. It would come to-night, with power and great glory, if the children of men could only believe — *believe* — BELIEVE the simple truth that the way of Jesus is the way of life.

VI.
THE INCARNATION.

(121)

"Why, what's the need of Temple, when the walls
O' the world are that? What use of swells and falls
From Levite's choir, Priests' cries, and trumpet calls?

"That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows!"

ROBERT BROWNING.

"Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest holiest manhood thou;
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

"But lead me, Man Divine,
Where'er Thou will'st, only that I may find
At the long journey's end thine image there,
And grow more like to it. For art not Thou
The human shadow of the infinite Love
That made and fills the infinite universe?"

ROBERT WATSON GILDER.

VI.

THE INCARNATION.

WE are to consider tonight the central question of our religion, the question respecting the character of its Founder. We call ourselves Christians and this implies that we are the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ. The question who he was, and what we ought to think about Him, is one to which every disciple of his ought to be able to give an intelligent answer.

Jesus is reported by Matthew as asking the Scribes on one occasion, ("What think ye of Christ?") That is the way the question stands in the old version. It would seem to the superficial reader to be a challenge to them to give him their estimate of himself. But that was not the precise force of the question. "Christ" is the Greek form of the Hebrew Messiah, and the question put to these Jewish theologians was, ("What is your opinion about the Messiah, for whom you are looking? Whose son is he to be?") They did not give the title Christ to the man Jesus, and he was not assuming that they would; he was simply trying to draw out their ideas about the origin of their Messiah. But we do give the title "Christ," which means King, to the man Jesus; most of us use the title, when we speak of him, oftener than we use the name; and if he should put the question to us, as it stands in the old version, it would mean,

to most of us, "What do you think of me?") That is the question which I desire this evening reverently to answer.

How many different answers have been given to this question in all the ages of the church! (It is often assumed that the teaching of the Christian church through all the centuries on these great themes has been uniform.) One of the groundless pretensions often set forth by apologists is that orthodoxy is that which has been believed "always, everywhere, and by all." But there is no statement in the oldest of the creeds of which anything like this is true. The history of doctrine is a record of constant changes in the forms of belief. Harnack has filled seven octavo volumes with the phases of theological development. People sing fervently:

"It's the old time religion,
And it's good enough for me;"

meaning, by that, generally, the old time doctrine; but if any one should ask them if they mean all the old time doctrines, and they should answer that they did, they would find themselves encumbered with reams and bales of theological rubbish, of which it would be difficult to make any definite use.

The doctrine of the person of Christ is one of the chief battlegrounds of theology. Through all the generations the theologians have been explaining him; and there are thousands, probably tens of thousands of volumes, in all the languages of Christendom in which these explanations are set forth. The fiercest controversies of the ages have been fought over these definitions of Christ. "In the course of this controversy," says Har-

nack, "men put an end to brotherly fellowship for the sake of a *nuance*; and thousands were cast out, condemned, loaded with chains and done to death. It is a gruesome story. On the question of 'Christology' men beat their religious doctrines into terrible weapons and spread fear and intimidation everywhere. This attitude still continues; Christology is treated as though the gospel had no other problem to offer, and the accompanying fanaticism is still rampant in our own day."* These are not figures of speech; they are quite exact and literal reports of what has been going on through all the Christian centuries. Men have been exiled, imprisoned, gibbeted for not holding right theories of the person of Jesus Christ. Armies have been raised to ravage the fields and burn the cities of those whose belief concerning him was supposed to be incorrect. Servetus was burned to death at Geneva because his opinions concerning the person of Christ were regarded as heretical. How strange it seems that he who came to bring peace to earth and good will to men should be the subject of such fierce contentions! How little do the men know of Jesus Christ who think that their loyalty to him requires them to hurl hot words of hate and scorn at all whose opinions about him differ from their own!

When we look back at the theories which men have held concerning him, and observe how far apart and how contradictory they are it becomes evident that there must have been a great deal of confusion in their thoughts. It has always been believed that he was in some way a link between humanity and divinity; but

* "What is Christianity?" p. 125.

just how the human and divine natures were united in him it has not been easy to explain. There was a sect in the early church which maintained that Jesus was in no sense a man; that his body was not a real body but a visionary appearance — a kind of apparition by which men's eyes were deceived. These people thought that the flesh was the seat of all evil; that matter was essentially vile, and that therefore no divine being could have any contact with it. The act of deception by which the divine person passed himself off as human these pious theologians seemed to find no difficulty in reconciling with their notions of deity.

At the opposite pole from these were the sects that denied to the man Jesus any divine character whatever. While holding that God and man are contrasted natures, they have maintained that the man of Nazareth was wholly human and could therefore be in no wise a partaker of the divine nature. They were ready to agree that this man had been raised by God to divine honors, so that he should be worshipped; but this was purely a political act of the divine government, so to speak; and the nature of the being thus exalted was not changed thereby.

About the middle of the fifth century the Council of Chalcedon formulated the theory which has since been held by many Christians to be the orthodox theory — which affirms “the union in the person of Christ of two complete and distinct natures, one divine and one human each retaining after the union ‘without confusion or change’ the same properties which it possessed before.” Thus a divine nature and a human nature are bound to-

gether in one person, not blended and interfused but kept distinct and separate. It is a difficult thing to conceive, and has always been a subject of controversy. Among Protestants, this debate has been raging for centuries. The Lutherans hold that in the union of the two natures the human is practically submerged, and that the consciousness of Christ is therefore essentially a divine consciousness — that he always knows himself to be omnipotent and omniscient; while the Calvinists insist on keeping the distinction sharp between the two natures and the psychological difficulties are solved, as Dr. Brown tells us, "by the hypothesis of an alternating consciousness, now divine and now human." Which of these theories is it necessary to believe in order to be orthodox? You cannot believe them both.

Such are some of the metaphysical puzzles with which this subject has been invested. They all start in the realm of abstractions with the notion that some kind of a philosophical scheme must be framed into which this historical person can be fitted. That is the old way of explaining the universe — think out your theories first and make your facts conform to them. Of course, these theories are all man-made; every dogma is as truly a human product as is a wagon or a clock. And of late years this theory of a dual personality has fallen more and more into the background. It raises so many more difficulties than it solves, that intelligent theologians have ceased to insist upon it.

The changes which have taken place in the conception of the person of Jesus Christ are due largely to this fact, that God and man are, by modern thinkers,

no longer regarded as contrasted natures. The difficulty with the old theories, as Dr. Brown tells us, arose from that great gulf which they placed between humanity and divinity. "Regarding God and man," he says, "as mutually exclusive terms [the old theology] is forced to conceive of the incarnation as a stupendous miracle, involving the union in a single person of two sets of mutually contradictory attitudes." { But when men begin to think of God as immanent in creation, — as revealing himself in the order and beauty of the universe, as the indwelling life of the world, as coming to the fullness of his manifestation in humanity, — that old dualism sinks out of sight. It is simply impossible for those who have come to believe in the presence of God in his world, to express their faith any longer in the terms of the old creeds.)

Consequently the modern theologians begin their investigation of this transcendent theme not among the clouds, but on the earth. Instead of starting with speculation they start with history. Instead of figuring out a scheme by which the Absolute can enter into human relations, they begin with the known, and find their way through it to the unknown; they begin with the human Christ, and through his humanity approach his divinity. "The true humanity of Jesus," says Dr. Brown, "has always been a fundamental article of Christian faith." Theoretically it has; practically it has been greatly obscured. For a great many centuries it has been virtually denied. The emphasis has all been put upon his deity, and his true humanity has been ignored. Dante's picture of Christ in "Purgatorio" gives us the notion of him which was really prevalent in the popular mediæval

theology — a figure with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle.) Such a grotesque monstrosity Dante found when he was looking for Christ. (The Son of man had ceased to be a friend and brother; he had become a theological symbol.) It was because of this dehumanization of him, in a substitutionary theology, that the church turned to the worship of Mary. Something human the soul demanded in its religious loyalties. God was inhuman, as all the theologies proved; Christ had become non-human, through their metaphysical and forensic manipulations; Mary the mother was still human and they clung to her as to one of like passions with themselves, whose sympathy they could trust.

It was because of this sterilization of Christianity by the legalisms and fictions of theology that men began to go back to Christ himself. The humanity of Jesus, they said, is the proper starting point for our study. Let us begin with facts that are level to our intelligence and find our way through these into the deeper mysteries of his being.

I suppose that the name which represents most fully the modern way of thinking about Jesus Christ is that of Albrecht Ritschl, the great German theologian who died in Göttingen in 1889. Ritschl was in many ways a disciple of Schleiermacher, but he thought independently and he has left a deep impression on his generation. Let me give you briefly, in the words of Dr. William Adams Brown, the gist of Ritschl's Christology:

"According to Ritschl the divinity of Christ is not so much a theoretical as a practical conception. * * * It expresses the fact that in Jesus of Nazareth his dis-

ciples find the ideal of humanity realized, and are conscious, through him, of being brought into contact with a power which is able to raise them above the law of necessity into the freedom and joy of the Kingdom of God. Hence, to the church, Christ has the value of God. For God as he is known in religion, *means just this practical power to help and to deliver*. What God is in himself we cannot say, and it is futile to inquire. Hence any attempt to construct the person of Christ by the aid of abstract conceptions like the Absolute, or the Logos, which have no basis in experience, is to invite failure. The true task of the theologian is to study the human Jesus that he may learn from an analysis of his life and work, what are the features of his character and ministry which gave him his unique power to uplift and to transform human life. When we have done this we shall have learned how it comes to pass that in him we find that practical power to help which we call God." *

Such are the methods by which the present day theology undertakes to find out what it ought to think about Jesus Christ. It does not go to the councils or the creeds or the philosophers. It finds confusion and darkness in all these speculations. It goes directly to Jesus Christ himself, to the record of him which we find in the Gospels. It tries to find out what he said, and what it means; what he did and what it signifies; what he suffered, and what it reveals. It hears him calling, Come unto me; take my yoke upon you and learn of me; I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; and it simply takes him at his word, and goes to him to listen, to learn,

* "Outline of Christian Theology," p. 340.

to follow. It finds that his Gospel is a practical gospel; that it offers help to overcome sin, help to live the good life. That, according to his teaching, is what it is for. The present day theology proposes to put this teaching of Jesus to the test of life. And by this purely scientific experiment it verifies his claims. It finds that those who open their minds to his teaching and their lives to his spirit, who become identified with him in thought and feeling, do find peace of mind, strength to resist temptation, courage and hope and moral vigor. In short they find that fellowship with Jesus brings God into their lives, brings into their lives that practical power to help and to deliver which we call God. There is no speculation about this, it is an actual experience.

Not only as individuals, but as social groups, they find that when they receive him into their midst, when they feed upon his truth, when they seek to govern their lives by his law and to live together according to his way, harmony and peace prevail, and the community is the home of welfare and happiness. The historical evidence of this is not so abundant as it ought to be, for this has not been the field in which men have been looking for the proof of the truth of Christianity; it has never been really expected, until very lately, (by the majority of Christians), that the religion of Jesus would exert any appreciable influence in transforming human society. That idea is beginning to dawn upon the minds of many Christians, but there are few who have fully grasped it, and there are multitudes yet who scout it as a delusion and a heresy. Their notion is that the work of Christ is to get people safely away from this world,

to heaven; the idea that this world is being made better or can be made better by spiritual and moral agencies they scoff at, as contrary to Scripture; they say that it is going to wreck and rottenness as fast as it can, and that nothing can be done to arrest its decadence; that our only hope is in the return of Jesus in the flesh to earth to gather out of the wreck the few faithful ones, and take them up into the sky, leaving the rest to sink deeper and deeper into degradation and misery until by and by Christ will come back again and wipe the whole population from the face of the earth in a great conflagration, after which he will set up his throne on the earth. That, they say, is what you ought to mean by the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That is the only way his kingdom will ever come.

Such has been the cheerful belief entertained by hosts of Christians in all the centuries. So long as any such notion as this was entertained, all expectation of the Christianization of human society by methods purely moral and spiritual was, of course, very dim. This world, lying in wickedness, was to lie and rot. And therefore, there has been no courageous and hopeful endeavor to apply to human society, in any large way, the transforming power of Christ's gospel. Consequently, the proofs of this transforming power are far less plentiful than they ought to have been, in this twentieth century. Nevertheless, imperfectly as the truth has been applied, there is evidence enough that this renovating power is in it, and that when the Christian people begin to comprehend what their religion is for, and set it to

work in a whole hearted way, it will speedily bring heaven to earth. There are facts enough, when they are gathered together, to make it clear, that the Social Gospel has in it the power of God unto salvation.

This, then, is what the men of the new theology find, when they go directly to Jesus Christ and learn from him what he proposes to do for men. They find, as individuals, that in his fellowship and under his leadership, they are inspired, uplifted, invigorated, filled with the passion of service. They find that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ becomes to them their Almighty Friend and Helper, and they are able to verify the words of Jesus when he said: "If a man love me he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." They find also in their hearts and in the world about them, reasons for an abiding faith that he who said, "I came not to judge the world but to save the world," is able to do what he said; they are perfectly sure that this present world is to be filled with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, and they are filled with a great and solemn thankfulness because it is their high privilege to have part with him in this great work and to enter into the joy of their Lord.

Speaking for myself, that is what the new theology has taught me to think about Jesus Christ. That is what it has done for me. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ as I understand it, for I know that it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one who will receive it.

(What has it done for the church?) For a good many it has done nothing, because they are blindly refusing to consider it. But some great gains have come to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. I am going to let Dr. William Adams Brown tell you something of what has been done for the Christian world by this new approach to Jesus Christ.

(“First of all, the humanity of Christ has recovered its rightful place in Christian thinking. We are no longer content to assert it as a doctrine; we wish to realize it as a fact. Through the mists of dogma and of tradition, under which he has so long been hidden, the gracious figure of the Man of Galilee begins again to be seen; and as the outlines take on greater and even greater distinctness, we are brought more and more under the spell of his simplicity, his originality, his greatness. We see the environment in which he lived, the quiet home at Nazareth, the simple life in the synagogue and at the carpenter’s bench. We reconstruct the conditions of the time, political, social, ecclesiastical. * * *

In this human world we see Jesus walking as a man amongst men; growing in knowledge with growing experience; deepening his sympathies by contact with suffering; winning men by the charm of unexampled frankness and simplicity; clothing his teaching with familiar imagery taken from the scenes of daily life; going at last to a death which was the inevitable result of the clash of two great ideals, only to appear again to the faith and love of his disciples, and to carry on through their devotion a work a thousand-fold greater than it had

been given him to do within the narrow limits of his earthly life.

"We have a better understanding of the Gospel of Jesus. The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man; the worth of the individual human soul, greatness through service, salvation through sacrifice, the kingdom of God as the goal of humanity — these truths, so inexhaustible in their richness and freshness are seen to be his peculiar contribution to the religious thought of the race.

* * * Today, as in each preceding generation, men turn to him with wonder and reverence as the supreme religious teacher of the race. * * *

"Greater than his teaching is the character of Jesus. Here, too, Christian thought owes a great debt to modern scholarship. When Christ is conceived from the point of the Absolute it is impossible to appreciate his moral greatness. But look upon him as a man of like passions and temptations with ourselves, and the full majesty of his character makes itself felt. A man who could live in the world and do what he did is unique. Where did he get his insight? What explains that self-mastery unexampled? This only is clear, that the Gospel and the character of Jesus belong together. He could speak of God as he did because he had had experience of God in his own soul and knew whereof he affirmed.

"The same causes which have led to a new appreciation of the character of Jesus have given us a new insight into the significance of his claims. Here again a frank recognition of the true humanity of Jesus is the

necessary condition of realizing his uniqueness. Humble and lowly as he was, clear-eyed and just in his perception of moral values, frank to recognize the rights of the least of his brethren to the same access to God which he claimed for himself, he was yet conscious of a unique relation to the Father and a unique function in mediating them to men. He recognized in Himself the center of human history, and looked for a day when all men should be gathered into the kingdom of which he was the head. This is what the Messiahship of Jesus means, an authority spiritualized, transformed, reborn, but authority none the less. In proclaiming Jesus as Lord the Christian church has made no departure from the Gospel of Jesus.

"Thus it is in Jesus Christ, understanding by the term all that we have passed here in review, — life, character, authority, gospel, — that we find the distinctive mark of Christianity. With his supremacy in the religious life of humanity, its claim to be the final religion stands or falls." *

This is a long quotation but you could not afford to miss any of it. And it seems to show that the Present Day Theology has found its way to a very large conception of Jesus Christ and his work. But it reached this inspiring conviction by the discovery that the great gulf which the traditional theology had fixed between man and God does not exist; that the human and the divine are not contrasted natures. The fundamental fact is that God is our Father and that we are his children. He is not only the Former of our bodies, he is the Father

* "The Essence of Christianity," pp. 298-301.

of our spirits. If anything is clear it is that children must be of the same nature as their Father. Everything that is essentially human is included in the nature of God; everything that is essentially divine is found in the nature of man. Divinity is finite in man; humanity is infinite in God. "Strictly speaking," says Mr. Campbell, "the human and the divine are two categories which shade into and imply each other; humanity is divinity viewed from below, divinity is humanity viewed from above. If any human being could succeed in living a life of perfect love, that is, a life whose energies were directed toward impersonal ends, and which was lived in such a way as to be and do the utmost for the whole, he would show himself divine, for he would have revealed the innermost of God."

Such a life as this Jesus lived. That is the historical fact. By living this life he became the most perfect revelation of God to men that it is possible for us to conceive. The strong saying of one of the early witnesses sets forth the truth. "The Life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and declare unto you the Life, the eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." The life of God was manifested to men in the life of a man. In no other form of manifestation could it have been so fully revealed. It is through the human nature that the divine nature finds its most perfect expression. Because Jesus was a perfect man he shows us the most and the best that we can know of God.

Thus the present day theology puts an end to the old dispute about the person of Christ by getting rid

of the ancient dualism, which set God and man over against each other as opposite poles of thought. This dualism was not merely the vice of Orthodox thinking; the Liberals were quite as much addicted to it. In the popular theology the Orthodox were always saying, Jesus is divine, and therefore, he cannot be human in any proper sense of the word; his humanity is only a temporary attachment or appendage. On the other hand, the Liberals were always saying, Jesus is human, and therefore he cannot be in any proper sense divine. When we have once grasped the unitary conception, which unites God and man in the terms of a common nature, that old dispute is ended. If God is the Father of us all, if we are the sons of God there can be no contrariety between our nature and his. We have got rid of the dualism which insists on putting humanity and deity into two separate categories. And Jesus Christ stands forth not only as the brightness of the Father's glory but as the perfect flower of humanity. The creed makers try to set forth this faith in metaphysical terms, but the best theologian of them all is the good Quaker poet:

"We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down,
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For Him no depths can drown.

"But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is he,
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

"The healing of his seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain,

We touch Him in life's throng and press
And we are whole again.

"Through Him the first fond prayers are said,
Our lips of childhood frame,
The last low whispers of our dead
Are burdened with his name.

"Our Lord and Master of us all,
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own thy sway, we hear thy call,
We test our lives by thine.

"To Thee our full humanity,
Its joys and pains belong;
The wrong of man to man on Thee
Inflicts a deeper wrong.

"Deep strike thy roots, O heavenly vine
Within our earthly sod,
Most human and yet most divine,
The flower of man and God.

"O Love! O Life! Our faith and light,
Thy presence maketh one;
As, through transfigured clouds of white
We trace the noon-day sun,

"So, to our mortal eyes subdued,
Flesh-veiled, but not concealed;
We know in thee the fatherhood
And heart of God revealed.

"We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phase we pray,
But, dim or clear, we own in thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way.

"The homage that we render Thee
Is still our Father's own,
No jealous claim or rivalry
Divides the Cross and Throne."

Thus we have learned what to think about Jesus Christ, not by questioning the philosophers and the dogmatists but by going first directly to him, and opening our lives to the grace which bringeth salvation, and then by believing what he tells us about the Fatherhood of God. One who helps us as he helps us, who gives us the power to rise from selfishness and animalism into newness and fullness of life, is entitled to be believed when he tells us that the Eternal God is his Father and our Father; that he is our Elder Brother; and that He, in his self-sacrificing love, is revealing to us the very heart of God; that as he loves us so God loves us; that as he shares our burdens of pain and woe, so God suffers with us and for us to save us from our sins.

This is the substance of what I believe about Jesus Christ. I do not know that I care to put any label on my belief; I would rather it should stand on its own logic and shine by its own light. Like Mr. Gilder's heathen in Galilee, in the year 32, I am ready to say:

"If Jesus Christ be a man
And only a man, I say
That of all mankind I will cleave to him,
And to him will I cleave away.

"If Jesus Christ be a God
And the only God, I swear,
I will follow him through heaven and hell
The earth, the sea and the air."

If I have not made his humanity a glorious fact, I have failed in my highest endeavors, but I do not think that any of you will say that I have made him no more than one of ourselves. More he is — so much more that we have no terms in which to express the difference; more, but not *other*; his nature is the same as ours; and toward that glorious perfection we are called to rise; it is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. "It is impossible," says Reginald Campbell, "to deny the uniqueness of Jesus; history has settled that question for us. If all the theologians and naturalists put together were to set at work tomorrow to try to show that Jesus was just like other people they would not succeed, for the civilized world has already made up its mind on this point and by a right standard recognizes Jesus as the unique standard of human excellence. But this is not to say that we shall never reach that standard, too — quite the contrary. We must reach it in order to fulfill our destiny and crown and complete his work."

The old theology was a theology of contrasts and contrarieties and antagonisms, and therefore, it was constrained in estimating the person of Christ to emphasize the theory that in his origin he differed from all the rest of humankind. It has thus made the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus an essential doctrine of orthodoxy. It has taught that his life began in a miraculous way; that he had a human mother but no human father. I have never felt inclined to make this a subject of controversy. I am not prepared to dogmatize about it. The beginning of every conscious life is to me a stupendous marvel. I can think of nothing more wonderful than

that a free spirit, endowed with thought and affection and volition should emerge from nothingness into being. There is nothing in biology that explains it. But that marvel constantly appears; it is as much beyond my power of explanation as is the origin of the universe; and since I must accept that, I am not disposed to make any very positive assertions about what can and cannot be in the beginnings of conscious life.

On the other hand the Scriptural proofs of the doctrine of the virgin birth are rather dubious. In only two of the New Testament books is it referred to. The Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke contain allusions to it. The Gospel of Mark, which is, by all, now admitted to be the earliest gospel, and the foundation of both Matthew and Luke, does not mention it. The Gospel of John, which is regarded as the chief proof of Christ's divinity, has not heard of it. The Apostle Paul who is the author of thirteen of the twenty-eight books of the New Testament, never speaks of it. No word of Jesus reported in any of the gospels alludes to it. There are two genealogies of Jesus, in Matthew and Luke, and both of them make Jesus the son of Joseph. The stories of the virgin birth in Matthew and Luke contradict each other at several points. There seems, certainly, to be much justification for the conclusion of many great Christian scholars that the stories in Matthew and Luke are late legendary additions to these gospels.

It is not disputed that the life of Jesus was sustained in the same way that our lives are sustained. Food

and drink and sleep and exercise were as needful for him as for us. He claimed no exemption from the common experience of humanity in the maintenance of his life. He would not have been the Savior that he is, if he had not shared with us all these human experiences, — if he had not known what it was to be hungry and cold and weary. And I confess that I should be glad to know that he was one with us in the origin of his life as well as in the maintenance of it. It seems to me that this idea of the virgin birth tends to throw some discredit upon the sacredness of marriage, which is a tendency to be deprecated.

At all events I protest against making any man a heretic because he believes that Mary told the truth when she said to Jesus in the temple, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." The latest and one of the most staunchly orthodox of books on the Person of Christ, by Dr. Mackintosh, a Scotch Presbyterian, says positively: "For my own part I should not think of regarding an explicit belief in the virgin birth of our Lord as essential to Christian faith; otherwise St. Paul was no Christian," and again, "We cannot imagine Christ himself insisting on acceptance of the birth narratives as a condition or preliminary of personal salvation."

The truth is that nothing is added to the moral greatness of Christ by insisting on this doctrine, and nothing subtracted from his essential divinity by the belief that he entered the world in a way that God has sanctified for all his children; and all disputation about the subject is not only unprofitable but unseemly.

I trust that this discussion may have brought the man Christ Jesus a little closer to your apprehension,— may have helped you to see that he is

“No fable old, nor mythic lore,
Nor dream of bards and seers,
No dead fact, stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years,”

but one who is sharing our life, bearing our burdens, feeling in his own soul the shame of our sin, and helping us to escape from it, understanding to the uttermost our needs and our limitations, yet strong to bring to us all the fullness of the divine compassion and invigoration and lift us up to newness and nobleness of life. And I hope that all these studies may be enabling you to see that the men of this generation who are seeking to interpret in more rational terms the great facts of the Christian gospel are not all the enemies of Christ. If I may ask Dr. Brown once more to speak for them, it shall be in these words:

“We have learned from Christ to call [the] Supreme Being Father and to see in his will the expression of a character like that of Jesus Christ. For the abstract Absolute of philosophy we substitute the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we confess his sovereignty we mean that the principles of Jesus are some day to dominate the world. When we speak of the Incarnation we mean that in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, simple, human, brotherly as we have learned to see it, God is revealing to all who have eyes to see what

he himself is like, and what he would fain have all men become."

Yes, and there has never been a day since Jesus was lifted up on Calvary when this life of Jesus, simple, human, brotherly, held so commanding a place in the thoughts and affections of the human race as it holds today, never a day when he was speaking through so many lips his messages of good will and peace; never a day when it was so plain that the way of Jesus is the way of life for the world.

VII.
THE ATONEMENT.

(147)

O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross, that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

GEORGE MATHESON.

VII.

THE ATONEMENT.

WHAT is the teaching of the Present Day Theology respecting the atonement? The fact that thought on this subject is not stationary, that it is in motion, is the first thing to note. Should we not expect this? What was the purpose of the revelation that came to men by Jesus Christ? Was it not to give men larger knowledge of God and his kingdom in the world, and to clarify and elevate their moral judgments? Should we not expect a marked intellectual and moral advancement among the Christian peoples? Unless Christianity is a failure this must have been the result. And as the progress of the centuries has been clearing and enlarging men's moral ideals must they not have been learning to see the great truths connected with the work of Christ more distinctly? Is it not inevitable that their explanations of these facts will change, that many childish and heathenish conceptions will be dropped, that the doctrinal statements about the atonement will be modified by enlightened reason and purified common sense? This is the thing to be looked for, and history abundantly proves that what ought to have been expected has come to pass; that the explanations which have been given of the work of Christ have been constantly changing, and changing for the better, from the first Christian centuries until now.

It has, of course, been believed from the beginning that something was done by Jesus Christ to restore men to their right relation with God. That men were in some way, out of harmony with God, estranged from him, afraid of him, was the verdict of universal experience. Something needed to be done to bring them into friendship and unity with him. That this thing which needed to be done has been done by Jesus Christ all Christians believe; they have only differed when they have tried to tell how he has done it.

For about a thousand years after his death the principal theory held and taught in the church was that the work of Christ was a work of ransom or redemption. A ransom is the price paid for the release of a captive or a prisoner; the redeemer is the one who pays the price. The human race, as was explained by this theory, had been captured by Satan, through the sin of Adam, and was held by him in captivity. The thing necessary to be done was to get the race out of the clutches of the devil. There was some dispute as to whether the devil had a legal right to his prey, but there was no question that he had possession of it; and possession, as the lawyers say, is nine points of the law. The "plan of salvation," as these old theologians conceived it, consisted in God's offering his Son to Satan as a ransom for the captive race. Satan accepted the person of the Son of God, and put him to death, and thus lost his legal possession of the human race.

The old theologians differed much about the details of this transaction; many of them maintained that the devil was outwitted in it; that he was not aware of the

divine nature of our Lord; he only saw that Jesus was his greatest enemy and he was determined to destroy him; it was not until Jesus rose from the dead that he discovered how grievously he had been tricked in the bargain. Some of the old fathers said that the human nature of Jesus — the flesh — was the bait with which the devil was caught.

For a thousand years the saints and prophets of the Christian church contented themselves with some such explanation as this of the atoning work of Christ. It was not the only explanation, but it was the one most widely held. What kind of a God did these good people believe in?

The time came, however, when the moral sense of the church began to revolt against the immorality of this theory. "You tell us that God is good," men said. "Then your doctrine of the atonement cannot be true. We will not believe it." But the great leaders resisted and denounced this protest. It was heresy. Abelard was one of those who protested. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who was one of the noblest of the mediæval saints, said that a man like Abelard, who disputed a doctrine which had been held by the church for a thousand years, could not be reasoned with but should be chastised with rods. And then, I suppose, after the hand-clapping ceased, the listening assembly joined in the ancient version of the song, the substance of which has been sung in every generation:

"'Tis the old time religion,
And it's good enough for me."

Men's ethical insights were, however, by this time, sufficiently enlightened so that this theory had to be abandoned. It was followed by the theory of the great Anselm which held the primacy in theology for three or four centuries. This was the theory that man by his sin had inflicted upon God an infinite injury and dishonor. To repair this wrong was impossible for humanity, for if every man and all men perfectly obeyed the divine law they would no more than fulfil their own obligation, and the vast outstanding debt, due to the outraged honor of God, would still be undischarged and the race would be hopelessly insolvent. But the Son of God, becoming perfect man, rendered by the perfect obedience of his life all that was due to God, and then, by his death which was purely gratuitous, accumulated a surplus fund of merit out of which the debts of believers in him might be paid. Being infinite, his sufferings had an infinite value, and sufficed to cover the obligations of all who availed themselves of his salvation.

This transaction, you will observe, was essentially commercial; it is hard to see how it accounts, in the remotest way, for the real facts of the moral and spiritual life. Yet it is somewhat less crudely repulsive to the moral sense than the ransom theory which it superseded.

After this came the legal and penal theory which, in various forms, prevailed among the Protestant churches, during and after the Reformation. That theory rested on the necessity for the vindication of law. The law of God was armed with a penalty which is death, spiritual and eternal. The first man was the fed-

eral head of the race. He was made so, not by any consent of his descendants, of course; he was so constituted by the divine decree. For what he did we are all held responsible. He disobeyed the law and we are therefore all guilty and punishable for what he did. The penalty is due and must be inflicted, else the law will be dishonored and the government of God will be impaired. Sin cannot be forgiven, it must be punished. God's nature demands this. It is not, however, essential that the sinner himself should be punished; the law will be satisfied, God's justice will be satisfied, if a suitable substitute can be found on whom the punishment may be inflicted. Christ, as the infinite Son of God offers himself as that substitute; the punishment is inflicted on him; God's justice is satisfied and those who accept him as their substitute are thus released from punishment.

The moral difficulties which this theory raised in men's minds, as soon as they began to think about it, were very serious. In the first place they want to know how it can be possible that billions on billions of human beings can be held responsible and punishable for the sin of the first man, to which they could have given no assent, in which they had no part whatever.

In the second place the doctrine was based on an idea of justice which contradicted our most fundamental ethical institutions. It assumed and taught that justice was satisfied if penalty was inflicted, whether on the guilty or the innocent. Instead of saying, "The soul that sinneth *it* shall die," it said, "If any soul sins, somebody must die, no matter who." It taught that guilt and the punishment of guilt, can be transferred from one

person to another. "It is impossible," says Dr. William Newton Clarke, "for punishment of sin to be visited upon any one else than the one who has committed it. Punishment is absolutely untransferable, and no one can possibly be punished for the sin of another. Others may suffer for it, but their suffering is not penal. From its very nature, punishment can fall upon the sinner alone."

It was a horrible imputation upon the character of God to say that such a thing could be. No matter if an innocent person did offer to endure the penalty due to a guilty person, any human judge or ruler who would inflict upon the innocent the punishment due the guilty, and declare that thereby justice was satisfied, would be execrated and driven from the judgment seat.

"Yes," says some one, "but justice in God is unlike justice in man. What would be wrong in us might be right in him, for he is infinite and we are finite."

Let us pause right here. This is a matter about which our heads must be clear. If morality in God is a different thing from morality in man it is not possible that there shall be any moral relations between God and man. If the principles on which he acts are not fundamentally the same as the principles on which we are required to act—if there is no moral reciprocity between us—then his rule over us is simply tyranny and it is impossible for us to love him or even to respect him, and we cannot feel any obligation to obey him. There may be many mysteries about the being of God that our intellect cannot fathom, but if he is our moral Ruler, morality must be essentially the same for him and for us.

"Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs cannot see,
But nothing can be good in him
That evil is in me."

John Stuart Mill was everlastingly right when he said, "I will call no being good who is not good in the sense in which I apply that word to my fellow men, and if such a being sends me to hell for not worshipping him, to hell I will go."

It is impossible, then, for any man of sane morality to admit the justice of punishing an innocent person for a guilty person's sins. The fact that the innocent person consents has nothing to do with the case; it is the administration of justice that we are talking about; it is the character of the judge that we are considering; and the proposition to transfer the penalty of a guilty person to an innocent person would be abhorrent to any just judge, or to any righteous government. The idea that justice could be satisfied by such a transaction is simply monstrous.

From an ethical point of view, then, the theory is impossible. It is equally absurd from a psychological point of view. The statement is that Christ bears the penalty of our sins. What is the penalty of our sin? The answer is that it is death. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." It is not only and not chiefly the death of the body, that is the common lot of human beings, and it befalls those who avail themselves of the salvation provided as certainly as those who do not. If physical death is the penalty of the law, Christ does not relieve us of that.

What is the death that is the penalty of sin? What are the elements of this penalty?

"The sense of guilt, remorse, a condemning conscience," says Dr. Clarke, "is an element in penalty," Is this transferred from the sinner to Christ?

"The disapproval of the holy and loving God," says the same authority, *"is an element in penalty."* Was this transferred from the sinner to Christ? It has long been taught that it was. The cry of Jesus on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," has been so interpreted. I cannot believe that it should bear any such interpretation. I cannot believe that Jesus could ever, for one moment, have felt himself deserted by the Father. I suppose that Jesus, in that agony, began to repeat a psalm, the twenty-second psalm, the words of which were very familiar to him, which begins with these words: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and which describes, very vividly, an experience like that through which he was then passing, but ends with a great song of victory: "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried to him he heard." No, I can never believe that Jesus, in the moment of agony, was forsaken or believed himself to be forsaken by the ever faithful God.

"Moral deterioration is an element," the chief element, *"in penalty."* Was this transferred to Christ? The penalty of sin is sin. Did Jesus suffer moral deterioration?

"The tendency to evil permanence in the states that

follow sin," is an element in penalty. Did Jesus Christ suffer this?

These are the central elements in the penalty of sin. All this we clearly saw, when we studied, in former lectures, the nature of sin and its penalty. To say that they were transferred to Jesus Christ, is a suggestion simply horrible.

It is true that these very things have been said, a great many times. The old theologians did not flinch from affirming just such things as these. They taught that Christ, as our substitute, did actually become a thief, a robber, an adulterer, a murderer; that he knew himself to be such and was punished as such. They said that he actually suffered in his soul, in his consciousness, the pains of hell.

The first settler and chief magistrate of the city of Springfield, Massachusetts, my old home, was William Pynchon. He was a man of learning and piety, not a clergyman, and his mind revolted at these teachings about Christ. He wrote a book entitled "The Meritorious Price of our Redemption," which he had printed in England. In this book he upheld the doctrine that the sufferings of Christ were penal, but he rejected the notion that he actually suffered remorse and the pangs of hell in his soul. That was the extent of his heresy. But the theologians of Boston heard from England some reports about the heresies contained in this book, and when the ship bringing the printed copies arrived in Boston, they seized the package and burned the books on Boston Common. Only four or five copies were

saved. I have had one of them in my possession and have read it carefully, also the books that were written to confute its teaching. So it is true that it has been believed that Jesus Christ as our substitute did actually suffer the spiritual and eternal death which is the penalty of sin. But it is safe to say that nothing so horrible as this has been taught in any theological seminary in this country, for the past hundred years. And I think that there are few reputable theologians of any rank in the world to-day, who would have the hardihood to deny that the infliction upon an innocent person of the spiritual penalties which are the portion of a guilty person is a psychological absurdity. It is simply impossible for any sane man to believe that Jesus Christ endured remorse, the sense of guilt, a condemning conscience, alienation from God, moral deterioration, and a tendency to permanence in the states that follow sin. But these are the essential elements of penalty. How can any one who knows anything about spiritual laws and their penalties maintain that any such transfer can take place?

I ventured the other day to say that this doctrine of penal substitution is not taught in modern theological seminaries. My statement was disputed, and I wrote to four of the leading Presbyterian seminaries to make inquiry. President Macaffee of McCormick Seminary, in Chicago, answers thus:

"If by a 'penal infliction' one means that Christ was a third party between God and man whom God held responsible for the sins of the world, certainly I do not

teach it. If, however, it means that Christ, being himself the Son of God, did take upon himself the sin of the world and accepted its penalty, not as a third party, but as God himself, then I do teach it."

This is not very explicit, but it is certainly not, in any proper sense, penal substitution. It does not represent Christ as standing between God and man and protecting men from the retributive wrath of God.

The professor of theology at Union Seminary, Professor William Adams Brown, writes me:

"While it is doubtless true that at some seminaries, as at Princeton, the penal theory is still taught, it is certainly not true that it is taught in all our Presbyterian seminaries. It may be of interest to recall the fact that as long ago as 1837, at the time of the separation of the Old and New Schools, the governmental theory of the atonement was widely held in New School Presbyterian circles. As a church we are certainly not less liberal now than we were then."

The "governmental" theory denied that the sufferings of Christ were penal, and held that they were exemplary.

President George B. Stewart of Auburn Theological Seminary, writes as follows:

"Replying to your inquiry, 'Do you teach in Auburn Seminary the doctrine that Christ suffered the penalty of our sins — that his sufferings were a penal infliction?' I beg to state I would answer it in the negative. The matter is most conspicuously dealt with by Professor Riggs in his *Theology of the New Testament*, and his

position is that Christ died in our behalf and not in our stead. In his judgment the Greek is most clear on this subject."

Professor Snowden, the Professor of Theology in Allegheny Seminary, sends me a book of his own from which I quote this:

"The doctrine of the atonement has been stated in terms of purchase and sale, that have made it repellent to many minds. The justice of God has been represented as vindictive vengeance. But such mercenary and barbarous notions have no place in this doctrine. The cross of Christ is the working out of the same principles in the heart of God that are experienced in the fatherly human heart. God must suffer for and with his children in order to redeem them, and yet vindicate and satisfy his own nature, and has experienced this suffering from the beginning of human sin. The Cross on Calvary was only an outcropping or momentary glimpse of the inner and *eternal atonement in the heart of God*, — a reflection of 'the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world.'"

These reports from several of the most prominent of the Presbyterian theological seminaries make it clear that the doctrines taught in these seminaries are as far from that ancient penal substitutionism as the east is from the west.

The protest of the moral sense against the old penal theory of the Reformers made itself heard long ago, as Dr. Brown has reminded us; and an attempt was made by the great publicist, Grotius, to soften it by what is known as the governmental theory, which denies that

the penalty of the law is inflicted on Christ; but affirms that it would endanger the divine government to forgive sin without making some show of severity, and that, therefore, suffering, not strictly punishment, was inflicted on Christ by the Father, for the purpose of showing to the world how much God disapproves of sin, so that he might be merciful without undermining his authority. This is the theory which for the past century has been largely taught in New England. It seems to me, on the whole, morally and logically weaker than the penal theory. Its merit is that it exhibits the revolt of the moral sense against the ancient penal substitutionism. But how the world could get the impression that God abhors sin by beholding the Father inflicting what looks like punishment, but is not, on his well-beloved Son, it is not easy to explain. The answer is, of course, that he is treating him as if he were a sinner for purposes of moral impression upon us; acting toward him as if he were angry with him, when we know that he is not angry with him, but loves him all the while, in order that we may see, before we are forgiven, how we ought to be treated. It all seems unreal, theatrical; we cannot wonder that it has lost its hold on thoughtful men.

Of course it is true that the old penal theory of the Reformers, and the Grotian theory, still survive in the common beliefs and teachings of the church; they are not often explicitly set forth, but they are assumed, for substance, one or the other of them, in a good deal of orthodox preaching. It is astonishing how long a theological theory will live after its brains are out and its heart has stopped beating. Yet what Professor

Stevens has said in his book "The Christian Doctrine of Salvation" is the indubitable fact:

"The theories which * * * interpret the work of Christ in mathematical, legal and official analogies are obsolescent. One may deem this a calamity but he cannot deny that it is a fact. * * * In the literature of investigation, in the theological monographs and doctrinal systems which are attracting attention and exercising wide-spread influence to-day, these theories find, practically, no place."

It is easy to see why these theories have either perished or become moribund. It is because they are morally defective. They ascribe to God traits of character and principles of conduct which are repugnant to our sense of right. It is because men are compelled to believe that the Judge of all the earth will do right, that they cannot believe these theories. It is because a keener and clearer sense of what is right has been gaining possession of men's minds, that they cannot ascribe to God conduct which in men would be reprehensible.

How then, does the new theology explain the work of Jesus Christ? The teachers of the new theology have, as I told you, many ways of looking at this matter; I cannot speak for any one but myself. But I will try to tell you, very briefly and simply, what seems to me to be the work that he has done for you and me, and for the world.

In the first place, it may be well to say that those old figures of ransom, of debt, of juridical necessity, of governmental policy are utterly incapable of explaining

this matter. They are figures, analogies; but they throw no light upon the deepest and most vital elements in the relation of man to God. When we begin to interpret the relation between our Heavenly Father and ourselves by the language of the military camp, or the merchant's ledger, or the courts of law, or the methods of governmental policy, we are sure to go very far astray. It is all a purely spiritual matter—a transaction between persons, a Father and his children; the interests of character only are under consideration.

The first answer to the question, what does Jesus Christ do for us men, is found in the first thing that was said about him after he was born: "His name shall be called Jesus [Savior] because he saves his people *from their sins*. It is from their sins, rather than from the penalties of their sins that he saves them. The old theology dealt mainly with the problem of the removal or remission of penalties; the new theology deals with the problem of getting rid of sin. It does not think it well to cancel penalties first; it teaches that the cause and not the consequence is first to be removed. If men will only cease sinning the penalties of their sins will not trouble them.

The sin from which men need to be saved is two fold,—alienation or separation from God, and selfishness.

As we said at the beginning, the work of Jesus is largely a work of reconciliation. The old theology taught that it was primarily, and mainly, a reconciliation of God to man; that God had to be appeased or placated or made propitious, so that he could forgive and save

men. The new theology teaches that God does not need to be appeased or placated, and that nothing needs to be done for his government to make it possible for him to forgive and save the sinner; that it is man, not God, who needs to be reconciled; that it is the alienation and suspicion and fear in the heart of man that needs to be removed. This, indeed, is what the Scripture explicitly says: "God was in Christ, *reconciling the world unto himself.*"

I think that it must be evident to all thoughtful men that in this part of the work of atonement some wonderful work has been done. The suspicion and fear with which men once regarded God has largely disappeared from the minds of men in enlightened Christian lands. There is still, of course, much superstition, and multitudes are still in darkness; but the prevailing ideas of God which are held by intelligent people in Christian lands today are very different from those which were held a thousand years ago or even a hundred years ago. The dread of the Almighty Power which once held the souls of most men in thrall, has now largely disappeared; we do not believe that he is hard and stern and pitiless; we may know that there are reasons why he should be displeased with us, but we are sure that he will deal with us fairly and considerately and kindly. This is the common thought about God which enlightened men in Christian lands, even those who make no profession of faith, have learned to cherish.

How has this change been wrought? Is it not the result of what Jesus has revealed to us concerning the Father? Is it not part of his reconciling work? Who

else has taught us to think these more rational and hopeful thoughts about God?

I think that I have never heard this spoken of as part of the atoning work of Christ, but it seems to me that it ought to be so regarded, and that it must be plain that we are all sharers in the benefits of that work of reconciliation. There is no one here whose thoughts of God are not different thoughts from what they would have been if Jesus Christ had not lived and died. For many of us he has not yet done all that ought to have been done; but for all of us he has done much in opening the way to God.

"If he had not *lived and died*," I said. That sentence indicates another difference between the old and the new theology. The old theology found all the value of his reconciling work in his death; the new theology finds it in his life and teachings as well as in his death. His death was the supreme illustration of his character; but it is by what he was and said and did, as well as by what he suffered, that he has reconciled us to God. It is by revealing to us the character of God that his atoning work is done. What he always claimed for himself was that he represented and revealed the Father; that his thoughts and feelings and actions and sufferings were a manifestation to us of God. When Philip once asked him to show his disciples the Father, his answer was, "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not seen me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

This is the atonement, it is the revelation of God to men. When they see him as He is and know Him,

they are reconciled to Him. If they are not it is their own fault, and they know it. And Jesus, in that last prayer of his, just before Gethsemane, most solemnly declares this great truth: "This is life eternal, *that they should know thee*, the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send even Jesus Christ. I glorified thee on the earth having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do." Could there be a more explicit statement?

The claim that Jesus made for himself, and that the whole verdict of the centuries has verified, was that he was one with the Father. Looking in his face we see the brightness of the Father's glory. And not only in the purity and truth and holiness of his character does he reveal to us the Father, but also and especially in his suffering and self-denying love. In the wilderness, on the mountain top, among the throngs of sufferers, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, lifting up the despairing, sitting at meat with publicans and sinners, weeping by the graves of those whom he loved, agonizing in the garden over the world's sin, lifted upon the cross by the world's malice and selfishness, he is showing us the Father.

Is it not clear that if the world believed that Jesus Christ represents God, manifests God, that revelation, that manifestation would be a most effectual means of reconciling the world to God?

The alienation and fear and suspicion by which the human mind has always been oppressed, when it has tried to comprehend the unknown Reality behind nature, must surely yield to such a revelation as this.

All religions are attempts to answer the question, "How shall man make his peace with God?" The answer of the Christian religion is Jesus Christ. "Behold the Man!" it cries. "He is the Revelation of God. Look at Him, listen to Him and you will know what to think of God. All of God was in Him that humanity can contain; all of God was revealed in him that humanity can know. He is the Way and the Truth and the Life. By the revelation which he makes in his person of the character and purposes of God, distrust and enmity are slain, and men, who were afar off, are brought near."

The old theories represent Christ as standing between men and God, as protecting us against the wrath of God or taking our part in our controversy with God, or making some governmental adjustment by which it becomes possible for God to be merciful and forgiving. In the phrase which Professor Macaffee repudiates, he is a third party between man and God, who does something which God could not or would not do, or who suffers something which God could not or would not suffer, by means of which men obtain pardon and salvation. All the old theories involve some such notion as this.

The new theology utterly rejects all such conception. It denies, as Professor Macaffee denies, that there is any third party in the transaction. It declares that *God* so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. It proclaims that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. It takes no crown from the brow of that Strong Son of God who has shown us the Father, but it rejoices to accept the revelation, and it

bows down with thankful love before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ finding in Him the source of all that reconciling work which it delights to proclaim.

"The supreme power in the universe," says Professor Lyman of Bangor, "is an atoning God. The atonement which Christianity really teaches us to believe in, when seen in its full dimensions, consists of a principle eternally active in the nature of God. The conception of God which the New Testament presents, is that of a God who is always striving for the moral recovery of his erring children. His tenderness and forbearance toward the sinful are visible in the sunshine and rain which he sends upon them as upon the good. His forgiving love is seen in the joy with which he welcomes back the wayward son who is no more worthy of the name. He is the shepherd who seeks the lost sheep until he finds it." *

This, let us remember, is what Jesus has taught us about God. The father in the parable of the prodigal son is Jesus' picture of God. The good shepherd is Jesus' representation of God. We generally apply it to Christ himself, and of course it describes him, but only because he represents the Father. It is the infinite, redeeming, saving love of God that he is telling us about in this parable.

Professor Stevens has a chapter on "Eternal Atonement," from which I take this paragraph:

"To me the words 'eternal atonement' denote the dateless passion of God on account of sin; they mean that *God is, by his very nature, a sin bearer*, — that sin

* "Theology and Human Problems," p. 194.

grieves and wounds his heart, and that he sorrows and suffers in consequence of it. * * * Atonement, on its 'Godward side,' is a name for the grief and pain inflicted by sin upon the paternal heart of God. Of this divine sorrow for sin the sufferings of Christ are a revelation. In the bitter grief and anguish which he experienced on account of sin, we see reflected the pain and sorrow which sin brings to the divine love. Thus Christ's work is grounded in an eternal fact—the sin bearing and suffering of God. In whatever sense Christ was the Representative of God, so that in him men see the Father; in whatever degree he was the interpreter and example of the divine feeling toward sin, in that sense and degree his suffering with and for men in their sins has its ground in the vicarious suffering of the eternal Love." *

There is the atonement, in the heart of God—the heart of the father crying out after his erring children, like David in Mahanaim after the rebel boy: "O Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The eternal Father suffers, always suffers with and for his children, and saves them by suffering with and for them. Instead of saying, with the old theology, "God *must* punish sin; he *may* be merciful to the sinner," the new theology says, "God must suffer if his children sin; by his suffering he seeks to save; if he punish, it is only to reclaim." As Patterson Dubois has said: The true father's attitude toward his disobedient child is not, "I will conquer that child, no matter what

* "The Christian Doctrine of Salvation," p. 422.

it costs him," but rather: "I will help that child to conquer himself, no matter what it costs me." That is what the true father must say.

This eternal atonement shows us not only the infinite compassion of God, it shows us also the heinousness of sin. It is against such love as this that we are always rebelling. It is upon this infinite patience and gentleness that we are turning our backs. Every evil deed we do, every vile or hateful thought we cherish costs a pang to the heart of our Father. And the revelation which Jesus has made of the Father's love is of no value to us, except as it shows us the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and makes us hate it, as God hates it.

How God hates the sin which is bringing loss and weakness and misery upon his children, every father knows. And every father knows that it is only when the boy comes to see the sin as he sees it, and to hate it as he hates it, that there is any hope for him. If anything will save the boy, it will be the discovery by him of the suffering which his sin is bringing to his father and mother. The pale and haggard face of a dear wife, the wistful and troubled looks of precious children — these are the silent voices by which many a man has been roused from selfish indulgence to make a stand for his manhood.

There may be some one here who can read that language in the faces of those who love him — some one who knows, even though he tries to hide the truth from himself, that by his wayward conduct, or his fading ideals, or his sordid aims he is deepening the shadows in which some who are dear to him are walking. There

may be some one here who knows that there are hearts which are wrung with grief and anxiety, not because of any unkindness which he has shown to them, but simply because of what he is, and is becoming. God have mercy on you, man! Don't press that cup of agony to those loving lips! Are you willing to take your own pleasure at the cost of their suffering?

Many a man has heard that call and has turned to better ways. And when he has looked back he has known that it was suffering love in the hearts of his dear ones that revealed to him the sinfulness of sin and made him hate it. And he has said to himself, more than once, "They bore my sins, in their own bodies and souls, and thus they saved me. It was their suffering love that redeemed me."

And so it was. They were working together with God and with Christ when they did it, though they may not have been conscious of it. They were partners with Christ in his sufferings. As Paul says, they were "filling up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ." They were carrying forward that eternal atonement which has been going forth from the heart of God from the foundation of the world.

It is by suffering love that men are saved from sin. It may be revealed to you by your wife or your mother, but she learned it of Jesus Christ, and he found it in the heart of the atoning God. It is all one, wherever you find it.

This is the doctrine of the atonement as the new theology has taught it to me. It has made all life divine for me; I think that I know what it means to live. It

has made Jesus Christ very wonderful to me; it has made the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ very dear. It has not made sin a light thing; it has revealed to me the meanness and hatefulness of wrong doing as I never knew it before, and it has given me reasons for wanting to be rid of it which that old theology could never have suggested. And when I think of the old notions about God which used to haunt my mind, I am filled with a great wish that men could get rid of them and could come to know the dear Lord and Father of mankind, whom Jesus has made known to me. I am sure that if they knew him they could not help loving him. And it seems a pathetic thing that this pitiful and patient God, who through all the generations has been seeking to make known his forgiving and saving love to his children, should have had such things thought and said about him as these we have been considering tonight: that men should have insisted on believing that he needed to be placated and appeased; that he could never be forgiving until he had had a sight of blood; that his children could not get near him except through some legal formalities; that unless there were a substitute to stand between him and us, his wrath would sweep us to destruction; yea, and when in his great love he sends his own Son to declare his love, in a great self-sacrifice, this messenger of his grace should have been turned by our perverse thought into a Mediator who softens his wrath instead of a herald who reveals and manifests his forgivingness. Isn't it a tragedy?

O pitiful God, forgive us! What right have we to dishonor thee by such dreadful doubts of thy goodness?

Help us to put away from our minds all these dark thoughts. May we not fear to trust in thy loving kindness. Let us Christians try to come as near to thee as did that old friend of thine, far back in the centuries, who could say:

“The Lord is full of compassion and gracious,
Slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.
He will not always chide,
Neither will he keep his anger forever.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins.
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth his children,
So the Lord pitieth them that fear him;
For he knoweth our frame,
He remembereth that we are dust.”

Into this great faith in thee as the atoning God,
help us all to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord,

VIII
FORGIVENESS.

(175)

"God dropped a spark down into every one,
And if we find and fan it to a blaze,
It'll spring up and glow like — like the sun,
And light the wandering out of stony ways.
God warms his hand at man's heart when he prays,
And light of prayer is spreading, heart to heart,
It'll light all, where now it lights a part."

JOHN MASEFIELD.

"Though sin too oft, when smitten by thy rod,
Rail at 'Blind Fate' with many a vain 'Alas!'
From sin through sorrow into thee we pass,
By that same path our true forefathers trod;
And let not Reason fail me, nor the sod
Draw from my death thy living flower and grass,
Before I learn that Love, which is, and was,
My Father, and my Brother, and my God."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

VIII.

FORGIVENESS.

WE are to study at this time the fact of forgiveness. It is closely connected with the fact of atonement; forgiveness is, indeed, the act or the experience in which atoning love finds expression. Atonement originates in the heart of God; when it is received and accepted by the sinner we call it forgiveness. It is a transaction which all takes place in the spiritual world. But it has become confused and entangled with facts of the natural order, and the first thing to be done is to separate these two things which do not belong together.

The belief in the uniformity of natural law lies at the basis of scientific investigation. It is, as we shall see, a belief. It cannot be verified. No man ever demonstrated it; no man ever will. Science starts with an act of faith. All its magnificent achievements rest on the assumption that nature can be trusted, that like causes will always produce like effects.

Does the scientific man know that the same causes will always be followed by the same effects? No, but he believes that they will. Does the religious man know that there is a God? No; but he believes that there is. Science as well as religion is founded on faith; I do not see why the act of faith with which the religious man sets out is not just as rational as the act of faith with which the scientific man begins all his investigations.

The belief in the uniformity of nature is, I suppose, a rational belief. But this does not mean that the laws of cause and effect hold sway in the realms of reason and affection. In physical nature these laws do hold; and man is a part of physical nature, allied, in some portions of his being, to physical nature, and subject, therefore, to these natural uniformities. But he is over nature, also; by his reason and his free will he is elevated above the plane on which these natural forces work, and the logic of causation can give no explanation of his conduct in those higher realms of thought and feeling.

Now it is often assumed that the laws of the lower realm, the laws of our physical nature, condition our whole experience; that the uniformities which are expressed in our natural life are not less fixed in our spiritual life. If that were true there could, of course, be no such thing as the forgiveness of sins. In the physical world law is uniform and inexorable; you cannot step in with an act of pardon between a cause and its consequence. And those who think that all the phenomena of what we call the spiritual world are explained by natural laws, cannot, of course, believe that forgiveness of sins is possible.

This skepticism is prevalent. There are many persons among us to whom the doctrine we are considering seems unscientific and absurd. If a man sins, they say, he must suffer, and there is no possibility of securing a remission of his suffering. He may be sorry for it, but the sorrow will make no difference, the punishment will be inflicted just the same. There is no such thing

as a suspension of penalties in nature. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. The governor may pardon a convicted criminal and set him free, but there is nothing resembling this in nature's laws, and nature's laws are the laws of God.

Beyond a doubt this fact of the uniformity of law, and of the irreversible and irremediable character of our acts, on which modern science puts so much stress, has had great influence of late upon men's speculations in the realm of morals and religion. Many persons have the idea that repentance is useless, that forgiveness is impossible; and that the whole gospel is, therefore, fundamentally erroneous and unphilosophical. "All these notions of pardon and forgiveness of sin," they say, "grow out of those old and untrue conceptions of God as an arbitrary, yet changeable Being; one who is sometimes angry and sometimes kind, one who threatens us sometimes with penalty, and then repents and withholds the infliction. We have outgrown all these ideas of the fitfulness of the divine Being; we believe that he is unchangeable; we believe that he governs the whole universe by inexorable laws, therefore we find no room in our theories for this doctrine of forgiveness. It is a survival of a childish theology, and bears no true relation to the thought of this time." I am persuaded that thoughts and feelings akin to these are very common in our time, and that they are often a great impediment in the way of some who are struggling with the evil and longing for a better life. If you make a man believe that the wrong which he has done is absolutely irreparable; that there is no such thing as forgiveness and

salvation; that his bad past is there, an indelible record, which never can be blotted out; that the injuries which he by his own evil doing has inflicted upon himself must be suffered forever, you have extinguished in his breast all the strongest motives to better living. We are saved by hope; unchain that anchor and the soul is adrift on the stormy seas of impulse and passion.

There is need, therefore, of a more careful statement of this doctrine of the divine forgiveness as it stands related to the uniformities of natural law. And it may be well at the outset to clear away the misconceptions with which the subject has been encumbered, to show what the Scriptural doctrine of forgiveness is not.

1. It is not true that God's purposes or feelings toward the sinner are at any time changed,—so that, whereas he was once unfriendly and inexorable he becomes compassionate and kind. No such change in the divine Being ever takes place. No compensation offered to his justice was ever needed to make him merciful to the sinner; no repentance of the sinner himself is the cause of any such modification of God's thoughts and purposes toward him. The forgiveness of sins does not imply any change in God. His compassions are from everlasting to everlasting.

2. Nor is it true that these laws under which suffering and degradation follow sin are ever relaxed in their operation. They go on enforcing themselves relentlessly. If you thrust your hand into the fire it will burn; the fact that you are sorry will not make it stop burning; no prayer that you can offer will quench the consuming

flame. If you perform an act of cruelty or treachery, your soul will be embittered and your heart will be hardened; if you continue in that course of action the result will be a steadily increasing darkness of mind and deadness of sensibilities. The law under which falsehood, dishonesty, perfidy, selfishness, bigotry, intolerance, censoriousness bring moral disease and moral debility and disorder and confusion and suffering into the soul, is a law that is never relaxed in this world, and never will be in any world. Forgiveness does not set this law aside. If the forgiven man violates the law of integrity, the law of love, he must take the consequences, he cannot escape them. There is nothing in forgiveness, there is nothing in grace, there is nothing in the mercy and compassion of God which even for one moment repeals or suspends the law which makes spiritual death the consequence of sin. Every saint on earth, every angel in heaven is under that law and always will be. In this sense punishment is eternal. Suffering, and moral degradation, are inseparably and eternally annexed to wrongdoing; the link that binds them together is firm as adamant; in no world will this connection ever be severed; the consequences of sin must be the same in all worlds and forever; where the wrong is done, there waits the retribution, instant and relentless; the fire that scorches the evil doer is an unquenchable fire.

This is the great fact which the student of nature seizes upon and which leads him to deny that any such thing as forgiveness is possible. But his denial rests upon a partial view of the case. The law under which suffering and moral degradation are inseparably joined

to sin is never set aside, but when the sinner turns from his sin to righteousness another and higher law than that of retribution comes to deliver him from his sin.

If a man thrusts his hand into the fire it will burn; that law will operate in the millenium just as certainly as it does today. But if he withdraws his hand from the fire it will not only cease to burn, but certain kindly forces of nature will go to work at once to repair the injury. Death, whose minister was the consuming fire, had seized upon his hand, but now life summons its forces and seeks to triumph over death. If the work of destruction has not gone too far the victory will be won; the injury will be repaired, the hand will be whole and sound again, death will be swallowed up of life.

By eating unwholesome or poisonous food, by exhaustive labor, by dangerous exposure, by reckless conduct you may greatly impair your own health. Just as long as you pursue these injurious courses you will continue to suffer, and your suffering and weakness will increase; but if you turn from them, before it is too late, and adopt a rational and hygienic regimen, the waste and injury will be stayed; you will gradually recover your lost health and strength; you may be as well as you ever were, though perhaps not quite so well as you might have been, if you had always obeyed the laws of health.

It is evident, therefore, that there is, even in nature herself, some sign of a reparative and restorative power by which the consequences of wrong doing may be overcome and in great measure counteracted. These healing energies of Nature, by which great and severe injuries

are often repaired, the wasted bodily powers restored, and life, which seemed to be almost gone, is vigorously renewed, — these are the foretokening, even in nature herself, of a gospel of forgiveness and help. It is with this tendency in nature itself that the good physician allies himself. His study is to get the obstructions out of the way and to give the restorative powers of nature a chance to do their work. His main reliance is upon this *vis medicatrix naturae* — this healing power of nature. There is a gospel in the very tissues, whose efficacy he seeks to call forth. Yet note that there is in all this no interruption or suspension of the law under which suffering and the diminution of the powers of life are annexed to disobedience, as their necessary consequences. The penal and destructive forces are never for a moment restrained or relaxed; the fire is there, and if you thrust your hand into it, it will burn; gravitation is there, and if you slip from the precipice it will fling you down; the laws of health are there, and if you transgress them you will suffer.

Precisely the same thing is true of the moral and spiritual life. When a man ceases from his evil ways and turns to God, the divine grace immediately begins a work of restoration in the soul. The injury that sin has inflicted upon the moral nature may be very great; the heart may be hard, the imagination foul, the will perverse or weak, but the remedial energies of the divine love have power to restore the soul to health and vigor. When sin is admitted into the soul death entereth also, and its wasting and destructive work begins; but the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is able to make

us free from the law of sin and death. The knowledge that God loves the sinner, in spite of his sins, and seeks to save him from his sins, is itself a mighty encouragement to one who turns from the evil. And this is the truth which is revealed to the sinner by the life and death of Jesus Christ. This is the atonement — the revelation of the suffering love of God.

But this is not all, for the Spirit of all grace surrounds this struggling soul with all the gentle reinforcement of his own light and power, pointing out the right way, strengthening the weak purpose, quickening, comforting, uplifting the soul, and thus gradually delivering it from the suffering and disability into which its own evil deeds have plunged it. And thus, I believe that any soul which has been injured by sin may by repentance and faith be made whole and sound. The ravages of death may be wholly repaired; even where sin has abounded, grace does so much more abound that it obliterates the marks of sin. It sometimes seems to us, in this world, that the effects of our evil doing upon our own natures must be irreparable; that we can never wholly recover from them; that we must always undergo some diminution of power and happiness because of them. I do not think that this is a necessary conclusion. Some things are indeed irreparable. Our neglect is irreparable; the work that we fail to do must forever be left undone. Opportunities of usefulness come to us every day that can never return; if they are not improved, our spiritual gains are by so much less, and the store can never be made up. And I doubt whether any of us will *in this world* fully outgrow *all* the injuries

which we have inflicted upon ourselves by our sins. But I do believe that in the endless future there will be time for entire recovery from all the wounds and weaknesses of sin, so that the salvation of the soul shall be entire and perfect, wanting nothing. The time will come, for the soul, as well as for the body, when death shall be swallowed up in victory.

And this is not all. Not only is the divine grace ready to help the sinner when he turns from the evil; not only does it begin at once its blessed work of restoration in his soul, replenishing his wasted energies and repairing his injured faculties, so that he becomes a new man in Christ Jesus, but it begins this blessed work of recovery in him even before he turns from the evil; nay, it is by this prevenient and unsolicited grace which seeks out the sinner in his wandering, and surrounds him with blessed influences, and gently draws him away from his sins, that he is brought into the ways of repentance. As the good shepherd seeks the lost sheep, so the grace of God goes after the sinner, never leaves him, indeed, but follows him, through all his alienation and disobedience, to seek and to save that which is lost.

“Let a man inflict upon himself a wound,” says Mr. Alden, “let him injure himself by excesses; he is indeed in the way of death; but lo, all the strength of this indwelling God seeketh his relief, is set to the healing of his bruises, accommodating itself to the perverse ways he has chosen, in some cases transmuting poison into nourishment, willing not that any should perish. * * * Our sin is forever the burden of his care. In our madness he patiently awaits the same thought and purpose.

* * * Behold what long-suffering the Eternal hath had from the beginning of man's abuse and torture of his power, — all the pure sweet currents of his loving life made turbid and turned awry through their mingling with the perverse currents of a rebellious humanity, running away from God. Yet he pursueth, following men through every tortuous path of folly and vice, and even into the charnel house of his spiritual corruption.”*

It is here that we sound the deepest depth of the divine compassion. God's forgiving love is manifested, not merely in helping sinners to escape from their sins, and from the consequences of their sins, when their hearts are turned toward him in penitence and trust; its great manifestation is that by which it follows the sinner in the paths of disobedience and folly and seeks by all the wisdom and strength of suffering love to reclaim him from his alienation and to bring him back into the ways of life and peace. Nor is there, in all this loving quest of grace and compassion, one moment's relaxation of those stern laws by which sin brings after it suffering and loss. The Father's heart goes out after the prodigal in all his wandering with tenderest compassion; nay it is the Father's love, the silent pleadings of his Spirit with the prodigal in the far country, that brings him to himself, and moves him to say, "I will arise and go unto my Father;" nevertheless, the hunger and the suffering and the misery are there, in that far country; the pains of that hunger are not for one moment assuaged; the prodigal will perish with hunger if he stays there; the only way to get away from that hunger and that danger

* "God in His World," p. 135.

of famishing is to get out of that country, and go home. It will never be made a pleasant thing or a safe thing for any prodigal to live in that country.

I trust that this analysis has made plain the great central facts on which this doctrine of forgiveness rests. The fact that the moral laws are natural laws; that they are, like all the other laws of nature, uniform in their operation; that they are not repealed or suspended in behalf of any sinner on earth or any angel in the sky, may be accepted as lying at the foundation of this whole subject. The student of natural science is warranted in his refusal to believe that the retributions of the divine law can be evaded or averted by the sinner or in his behalf.

But the fact that the student of natural science fails to take into the account is that there is something besides law in this universe; that while God is law he is also love. His law he does not set aside; but his love constantly seeks to save men from the consequences of disobeying his law. He never remits the penalties of sin, but he labors and suffers and waits with infinite patience to persuade the sinner to turn from his sins, and thus escape their penalty; and he surrounds, with all the helps and safeguards of his mighty grace, those who turn from the evil, that he may restore to them the life and power and peace that they have lost.

Let us bear in mind that our Christian faith is a faith in the forgiveness of sins, not in the annulling of penalties. The New Testament words most often rendered forgiveness means putting away, or releasing, unbinding, loosening; but it is spoken always of sins,

and not of penalties. The divine grace seeks to release us from our sins, to set us free from our sins,—to loosen their grip upon us, to break the chains of evil habit, to lead us forth into the free ways of righteousness and peace. When we are once delivered from our sins, we need have no fear of their penalties, and it is not from the penalties of our sins that Christ comes to save us but from the sins themselves.

It is generally imagined that God's forgiveness is a sovereign, an arbitrary act, an act of will; that he can forgive whom he pleases when he pleases; that forgiveness is a mere exercise of the will of the one who forgives, and is wholly independent of the state of mind of the one who is forgiven. But this is a great error. It all comes from building our theologies on the analogies of human government. The governor can set a criminal free, no matter what the criminal's state of mind may be. He can cancel, by his prerogatives, the penalty of the crime. But God cannot set a sinner free from his sin, by an arbitrary act of power.

Forgiveness is in one sense like a gift; it cannot be bestowed unless it is accepted. A gift must be freely received as well as freely given. That which another forces me to take is not a gift, it is an imposition. A gift implies a receiver as well as a giver. Forgiveness also implies a receiver as well as a giver. No man's sins are forgiven till he has himself, by his own free act accepted of forgiveness. No man's sins are forgiven till he yields to the divine mercy and turns into the path in which God is leading him. There may have been *forgivingness* in the heart of God, but the *forgive-*

ness could not, in the nature of the case, be made effective, until the sinner forsook his sins.

I wonder if we could bring this truth home, and try to understand, as individual men and women, just what it means. Are our sins forgiven? Is there for us no sense of condemnation when we think of our own conduct? Or is there some consciousness of the divine disapproval, some feeling that the good God is saying to us what he said to the church at Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee." Such feelings are not rare among conscientious people, although they are not so prevalent or so oppressive as once they were. But they are not comfortable feelings. No good man likes to be under condemnation. Sometimes they are very painful and distressing. I may be speaking to some one who is bearing a heavy burden of conscious guilt; who is saying, in the words of a hymn that I often joined in singing, sixty years ago,

"O that my load of sin were gone!"

Well, why not be rid of it? What hinders your receiving, here and now, free and full forgiveness? If what we have been saying is true there is no obstacle in the heart of God. There is nothing that he wants to do for you so much as to assure you of his forgiveness. There is no legal or governmental impediment, absolutely none. There is nothing more in your way than there was in the way of that prodigal in the far country. That father's wrath did not have to be appeased. Nobody had to intercede with the father for the son, or to be punished in the son's stead. All the boy had to do

was to go home and ask the father to forgive him. Nay, he was forgiven before he started for home, before he thought of going home, before he came to himself at all. The father did not wait for him to come home and confess his sin; "while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." That is what Jesus tells us about the divine forgivingness. Don't believe any theology of forgiveness which contradicts the theology of Jesus.

Why, then, are you staying under this cloud of condemnation? Why are you not forgiven? I am afraid that the impediment is in you. I am afraid that you are not forgiven because you do not want to be. Perhaps what you want is to have the penalty of your sin remitted, and not to get rid of the sin. Perhaps you rather like to cling to the evil ways that have become habitual with you; it is the consequences that you want to shirk. Well, there are theologians who can tell you how to get rid of penalties, but that is not in my line; I know nothing about any of those arrangements; the only thing I am interested in is in showing men how to get rid of sin. And when that is your honest wish nothing in earth or heaven or hell can stand for one moment between you and God's forgiving grace. It matters not how great your sin has been; it matters not how vile and cruel and false and mean you have been; if you want to be rid of your sin, the one thing you need to know is that the eternal God has been waiting, waiting, waiting, for a long, long time, for you to come to yourself and to come home to him.

There may be another reason why you have not entered into the peace of forgiveness. What is that prayer that we say every day? "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." And you remember the comment which follows: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." This may seem like an arbitrary and severe judgment; it is simply the expression of a psychological necessity. To be forgiven is to be brought into harmony with God, to be one with him in thought and wish and will. But God's atoning love seeks to reconcile *all men* unto himself; and his forgivingness embraces all his children. You simply cannot be in harmony with him while you are at enmity with your neighbor. You do not share God's feeling toward your neighbor. The forgiveness is waiting for you, but there is a foe in your heart that will not give it room. O beloved, is it not clear that if we desire to be the children of our Father in heaven, we cannot have any enemies?

This leads us on to a question which sometimes exercises the minds of casuists, whether man can forgive sins.

I remember a newspaper controversy some years ago between two Columbus moralists over this question. One disputant said yes, and one said no. By the latter, the word forgive was used as if it meant pardon, or remission of penalty.

"The assertion is," he said, "that a man can forgive any violation of God's will by others; and this inference is inevitable that they can also remove any consequences

which God himself removes." But God never removes the consequences of sins, until the sins themselves are removed; he seeks to remove the causes, not the consequences; the sins, not the penalties; and when the sins are removed, then his grace comes in to remove the consequences.

Now, I do not believe that a man can forgive sins, *alone*, by his own prerogative. God himself cannot do that, as we have seen; for the forgiveness of sins is not an act of power but an act of grace, and it implies, for its completion, at least two consenting wills. But man may be a co-worker with God in this great work; he may manifest to his fellow man something of that divine love which found utterance on the cross; and he may, by kindness and faithfulness and sympathy help in turning men from the ways of sin. Can one man help another to get free from the bondage of sin, to repent and turn to God? Then man may certainly be a co-worker with God in the forgiveness of sins, for this, as we have seen, is the essence of the divine forgiveness; it consists, first, and chiefly, in helping men to get free from the sins themselves. And nothing is more certain than that one man can help another to shake himself free from the old bad ways and turn to God.

But then, you say, the old bad past is there, with all its shame and misery, and the effects of it, too, are in the character of the penitent sinner. The consequences of his sin man cannot set aside. God's grace can help him to outlive these consequences, but man can do nothing for him. This part of the work of forgiveness must be done by God alone." I am not so sure of this. I

think that men may be co-workers with God in this part of the work also. What are some of the consequences of this man's sins which divine grace now seeks to remove?

He has lost the confidence of his fellow men. That is one of the penalties of wrong doing. You can help, surely, in removing this penalty. You can show him that the confidence of *one* of his fellow men is restored to him.

He has lost his self-respect. You can help him, by respecting him, to regain it.

He has lost that blessed heritage of good thoughts which are so great a comfort and stimulus to all good men; you can commune with him often; you can share your own thoughts with him, and thus help to fill his mind with better ideas and pure aspirations.

His will is weak; you can help to strengthen it, by surrounding him with good influences, and by confirming and applauding all his resolute choices.

Thus it seems to me that the work which God's spirit is doing in this man's soul, to restore and heal and reinforce, to repair the ruin sin has wrought, is a work in which his fellow men may have large part; that so far as the work of forgiveness is the work of healing and reclaiming the offender, *it is not likely to be very well done unless men are very active in it.* The truth is that men are called to be partners with Christ in every part of his work here in this world; that they are to fill up that which is behind of his sufferings; that they are to die with him upon the cross; that they are to rise with him into newness of life; that they are to reign with him

upon his throne; that they must, therefore, enter into this great work of forgiving sin. The spirit that longs to save men from sin, the self-sacrificing love that follows them into the wilderness to rescue them from sin, the sympathy and compassion that convinces them that there is help and friendship and opportunity for those that are lowest down and farthest off — it is this that is needed, more than anything else, in the work of saving men. We have been free enough in our offers of the *divine* grace, but the surest way, after all, to make men believe that God loves them, and forgives them and wants to help them, is to show them *that we do*.

"There is a truth," says Frederick Robertson, "in the doctrine of absolution. God has given to man the power to absolve his brother, and so to restore him to himself. The forgiveness of man is an echo and an earnest of God's forgiveness. He whom society has restored realizes the possibility of restoration to God's favor. Even the mercifulness of one good man sounds like a voice of pardon from heaven; just as the power and the exclusion of men sound like a knell of hopelessness and do actually *bind the sin upon the soul*. The man whom society will not forgive nor restore is driven into recklessness."

The sad fact is that the divine forgiveness fails of its blessed power in this world largely because it does not find such expression as it ought to find on human lips, in human lives, in your life and mine. We are quite too willing to leave all this work to God, but the great majority of those round about us who need forgiveness will never know what it is till they see it man-

ifested in the lives of their fellow men. You could not tell them what it is in such words that they would understand it, but you can show them what it is in such deeds that they can not help understanding it. This one truth that Christ always conveyed to the minds of the miserable people who crowded about him was that the past was not irreparable, that there was a chance for the worst of them, that the Father in heaven was waiting to receive and to restore those who had fallen lowest and wandered longest. And if we are the children of our Father in heaven, that will be a large part of our business in this world.

“Whosoever sins ye forgive they are forgiven unto them; whosoever sins ye retain they are retained.” We have made this a priestly function, and have forgotten that we are all kings and priests unto God. These words were not spoken to the apostles; they were spoken to a company of the disciples. They are the simple statement of a fact one side of which we see illustrated every day. Certain it is that society possesses and exercises the power of retaining the sins of those who have fallen into evil ways. We can and do turn our backs on offenders, and shut them out of our sympathy, and practically bar the gates against their return to respect and honor.

How many a hapless woman is walking these streets tonight, outside her paradise; and the flaming sword which prevents her return is not God's wrath, but man's relentlessness. God's forgiveness can hardly be made effective in her case, because of man's — and woman's — unforgivingness. And do we not all know that if we

could truly enter into fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ in our attitude toward her and all such sinners, many of them would be saved from their sins?

Beloved, it is borne in upon me, as the days pass, that this function of forgiveness is a large part of the business of the Church of Christ upon the earth. There are so many who need to be forgiven, and the atoning God, whose heart is always yearning over his wayward and unhappy children *needs us* to reveal and convey to them his forgiving grace. I do not see how it can ever be made known to them unless we make it known. Here are all the delinquents in our jails and prisons and work-houses; here are the vagrant and vicious and disorderly classes in society; here are the revolutionary elements in the industrial order—what is the attitude toward them of our Lord and his Christ? Is not the heart of the atoning God yearning over them? Is not his attitude toward them the right attitude for us? We are inclined to assume that our only business with these delinquents is to punish them. I doubt whether we are called to punish anybody. I doubt whether any of us are wise and good enough to punish evildoers. It may sometimes be necessary for society to confine and restrain those who have shown that they cannot safely be allowed their liberty; but to punish them—who knows enough to mete out the just retribution? There is only one thing that we have a right to do for them, and that is to forgive them—to convey to them as well as we can the assurance of infinite mercy; to help them to rise from their sin into the newness of life in which

they will be ready to accept the divine forgiveness, and come into harmony with God.

This would be true, even if we were in no wise responsible for the evil condition in which they find themselves. But, in truth, there are reasons why we ought not to be too merciless in our judgment of them. As a wise and sane religious teacher has said: "Our political, industrial and social institutions, beneficent though they may be shown to be in a large measure, nevertheless have ghastly by-products of moral injury which sometimes assume enormous proportions. Children, stunted by premature toil, women debilitated by cruel conditions of work, laboring men embittered by the ruthless exploitation of their labor, business men who are forced to choose between cheapening their honor and ruining their fortunes, young men and women with absolutely no chance to know what manhood and womanhood means — has the Christian principle of atonement no bearing upon such moral sufferers as these? "

And if we are to be partners with Christ in his atoning work for such as these, — if we are to bear their griefs and carry their sorrows with him, — then our hearts must also be enlisted in conveying to them the message of his forgiving love.

And if toward these more flagrant social offenders our attitude must always be merciful, what else can it be toward the great multitude of our fellow men?

O brother men, is not this the one thing needful, in the church of today, and in all our social life — more of the spirit of forgiveness, more of the Christly passion that longs to set men free from the bondage of their

sins, to help them to break the bonds of sense and selfishness, to undo the heavy burdens of groveling use and vicious habit, to win them from the ways of hate and spite and resentment into the ways of friendship and good will? I beseech you, beloved, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that you seek to learn this lesson. Let us not suppose that we are going to reform the world by the fierceness of our judgments and the bitterness of our maledictions; the only power that will ever subdue the world is the suffering love of Christ revealed in human hearts and human lives. Our business in this world is not to learn how to censure, how to denounce, how to curse; but how to be patient, how to be merciful, how to forgive.

IX.

THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

(199)

"Life loveth life and good; then trust
What most the spirit would, it must;
Deep wishes in the heart that be
Are blossoms of Necessity.

"A thread of Law runs through thy prayer
Stronger than iron cables are;
And Love and Longing toward her goal,
Are pilots sweet to guide the Soul.

"So life must live and soul must sail,
And Unseen over Seen prevail,
And all God's argosies come to shore,
Let ocean smile, or rage and roar."

DAVID A. WASSON.

"At end of Love, at end of Life,
At end of Hope, at end of Strife,
At end of all we cling to so —
The sun is setting — must we go?

"At dawn of Love, at dawn of Life,
At dawn of Peace that follows Strife.
At dawn of all we long for so —
The sun is rising—let us go!"

LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON.

IX.

LIFE EVERLASTING.

OUR theme tonight is the continuance of life after death and the manifestation of this life in human form. In discussing this theme I find myself under some embarrassment. The subject is one which I have treated so frequently from this pulpit that it is difficult to say anything new. Several of these more carefully considered arguments have been printed and some of you are familiar with them. Naturally, I have sought to present, in these former discussions, my strongest reasons for the belief in a future life. To repeat these reasons in this discourse would be wearisome to some of you, yet to pass them by would do injustice to the argument. I must, therefore, remind you that what I say tonight is only a partial and fragmentary presentation of the subject, referring you for a more complete statement of my own belief to the chapter "Is Death the End," in the little book entitled "Burning Questions," to the chapter on "The Hope of Immortality" in "How Much is Left?" and especially to the little booklet entitled "The Practice of Immortality." For other and far abler discussions of the same theme read Dr. Munger's sermons in "The Freedom of Faith," and his noble essay on "Immortality and Modern Thought" in "The Appeal to Life."

The Christian faith which I am trying to confess

is that the conscious life of the spirit does not terminate with the death of the body; that the physical organism is the shelter or the temple of an immortal life; that death is but the departure of the immaterial intelligence from its material habitation; that when the body returns to dust as it was, the spirit returns unto God who gave it.

With respect to the fact of the continuance of life beyond the change which we call death the present day theology does not differ from the traditional theology; with respect to the manner in which that continuance is effected its teaching is perhaps somewhat different.

There are those who suppose that modern science has undermined and overthrown this belief; that it has succeeded in identifying the body and the soul so completely as to leave no room for faith in the separate existence of the soul. This is a great error. I think that few of the great scientists of the present day make any such assertion; many of the greatest of them emphatically declare that there is not a particle of proof that thought is a function of matter, or that the human intelligence does not exist apart from the body. The phenomena of mind cannot be explained by physical laws; there is no correlation between reason, imagination, reverence, affection on the one hand, and the chemical and physiological processes on the other.

Professors Thoreau and Geddes, two of the most distinguished biologists, say: "We see, then, that while modern Biology no longer postulates a 'vital force', that is a hyper-mechanical factor, a mystical power, a non-material agent presiding over the activities of the body,

it admits, through, probably, the majority of its experts, that the phenomena distinctive of life cannot, at present, be re-stated in the language of chemistry and physics." *

Professor J. H. Muirhead says: "The general result of the analysis now generally accepted in psychology is the vindication for the mind of a reality of its own, independent of the physical order."

Some materialists have spoken of consciousness as "a function of the brain," but John Fiske says this is "perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known in the history of philosophy."

Here is what John Tyndall said, a good while ago: "Granted that a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the organ, nor, apparently, any rudiment of the organ which would enable us to pass from the one to the other. They appear together, but we do not know why. The problem of the connection of the body and the soul is as insoluble as it was in the pre-scientific ages."

These testimonies of modern philosophers, all of them evolutionists, must suffice. But it ought to be said that the recent explorations in these borderlands of science, have greatly deepened the conviction in many of the most careful investigators, that there is something there which has to be reckoned with, something which cannot be brought under the law of the conservation of energy, something which no known physical theories can account for.

* "Ideals of Science and Faith," p. 55.

Yet it is true that physical science is as powerless to affirm as it is to deny. It can produce no disproof of the continuance of life after the death of the body, neither has it any proof of it; science is compelled to be agnostic on this question. It may bring us hints, suggestions, foregleams of the after life, but it can offer us no demonstrations. The life to come is to many a blessed hope, to some a strong expectation, it is to none an object of experimental or scientific knowledge.

There are those, indeed, who claim to have had immediate communication with spirits who have departed from this life; but while I would speak with respect of those who entertain these beliefs, I must simply say that all the evidence which has been presented to my mind of such revelations has seemed to be extremely unconvincing.

There is no demonstration, by science, of a future life. But, as I have said, there are hints and suggestions of possibilities which are worth considering. It is noteworthy that most of those scientific men who maintain that there is no proof of a future life, yet confess that they hope for it.

Even death itself seems to some of them to stand with a bony finger pointing to the future.

"We shrink from the 'King of Terrors,'" says Dr. W. L. Walker, "but really he has been a very good friend to man. We have already seen that death came in to serve the development of higher life. Unicellular organisms may, in a sense, live forever, but they can never develop into anything higher. Apart from death there would have been no progress, and man would never

have been reached at all. And after he was reached, had not death continued operative, not one of us now living would have had the chance of participating in life; there would have been no room for us; not only 'no platter for us at Nature's board', but no room for us in the world. Moreover, apart from death the tenderest feelings and highest aims of Humanity would not have been awakened. Death is here as the servant of life. What a contradiction it would be, therefore, if that same ordinance of death should become the final destruction of the very life to produce and to serve which it came into play — when that life had reached its highest form. Death, therefore, which has as its function the promotion of life, cannot be the final destroyer of life which we have been too ready to imagine it might be. May it not rather still be, as it has been in the past, a means to a higher stage of being; may it not very well be true,

'That death is but a covered way
'Which opens unto light'?" *

Even the physicists open to us some startling possibilities. Death dissolves these physical organisms which we inhabit; but may there not be something untouched by this dissolution? "The chemical 'atom'," says Mr. Walker, "that makes up our bodies may all be dissolved, and yet something real, — the real essence of matter — will remain. Matter has been reduced to electrons, and, as Mr. Zimmerman says in his newest book, 'What do we Know about Electricity?' *Electricity*

* Christian Theism," p. 401.

may exist apart from matter.' This is not absolutely proved but it is highly probable. In that case electricity may be a sort of ethereal matter, which, besides being always intimately united with ordinary matter, is also capable of existing independently. This, however, applies only to negative electricity. * * * We have already quoted the saying of a German scientist to the effect that our modern analysis of matter takes us to the borders of a new and as yet mysterious world. Is it not with this deeper reality that our whole mental life, and especially that deepest element of self and of character is ultimately in contact?" *

Surely, if it is possible for electricity to exist apart from matter, it is not improbable that thought may exist apart from matter. I must quote a little further in the same direction, for these are most suggestive inquiries. That mind, *so far as this present order is concerned*, has a physical basis, is not questioned; and death is the dissolution into atoms of this physical basis. "But science is now teaching us that these atoms are not ultimate. What is ultimate, science is not yet able clearly to say. As far as it goes it is Ether in some form. Therefore, there may not really be that complete dissolution even of 'the physical' which has been imagined. So far as contact with the external world is concerned there is dissolution, and as far as consciousness is given *by our relation to this world and the forces that play upon it*, consciousness must cease. For such consciousness the grosser forms of matter are necessary in a vital condition, and for this again we must have the circulating

* Ibid, p. 431.

blood. When these fail us, *this-world* consciousness ceases. But it by no means follows that the physical basis of the mind is so completely dissolved that the Mind (insofar as it is related to such a basis) is destroyed, that all consciousness ceases, or that, if it does cease, it cannot be started again in relation to the stimuli of an etherial or spiritual world." * * * Must we not believe that "when death dissolves the chemical basis of our life, (and death can do no more) the etherial basis remains untouched and our life goes on in a higher world?" *

Now let us clearly understand that these things are not set forth as scientific verities, nor even as scientific probabilities; they are simply possibilities to which candid scientific men have opened their eyes. They do not warrant us in affirming that life goes on after the body returns to dust, but they do warrant us in saying that the denial that it can is pure dogmatism. You hear such denials, now and then, from men who have some reputation as scientists, but they only show that scientific men can be dogmatic as well as religious men. No greater dogmatist than Haeckel has ever appeared among theologians; he was constantly saying that things couldn't be, when his wishes or his prejudices were his main reasons for saying so; and the explanation of the universe which he offers us, in place of God and immortality, is a sheer assumption, unproved.

It would seem that if we want to find reasons for our belief in the reality and permanence of the spiritual world, we shall be obliged to look for it somewhere out-

* Ibid, pp. 437, 438.

side the material world. If I wanted to prove my friend's loyalty to me, I would not think to obtain evidence of it by taking his temperature or counting his pulse or measuring or weighing him; I should have to look for it in other quarters. If I wanted to get the real value of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, I wouldn't think to find it by counting the number of the notes, nor by estimating the number of foot-pounds of muscular power exerted by each of the seventy musicians in the performing orchestra. Spiritual things are spiritually estimated. And we must not miss the truth for which the great philosophers of today, like Eucken and Bergson, so stoutly stand, that the spiritual realm has its own laws, its own standards, its own certainties.

The great word of the spiritual realm is love, the sympathy of kindred souls; the affection by which one finds his joy in the well-being of another; the good will by which the gains of life are shared, and giving becomes more blessed than receiving. This is not a fact of the physical order; you cannot, as I have said, verify it by any physical tests, but it is the supreme certainty of life. If anything about this life of ours is indisputable it is that this principle is the highest thing in the universe. The universe comes to its fulfilment in love. Life, when it is finished, bringeth forth love. And, as a clear thinker, has suggested, "if the supreme law of life is love, then the Power that gives us to discern this — imposes it on us, works it in us as the result of our experience — must itself be in such unison with that law, that we can confidently say, 'All's law and all's love.' It has made us so that we cannot bear to part

for ever from those whom it has made us love; and can that same formative and all-working Power permit us to be torn from itself by that which we have seen was employed as a means of reaching us?" And I think that there is something almost inevitable in the logic which drives us on to say: "The love that lives in us is in itself something of God in us. It belongs in its essence to a higher realm than the physical. With nothing is the personality so identified as it is with the love that inspires and dominates the life—it is its very essence, indeed. In the very existence of that love we have something in us that is deathless. Surely we must say with Emerson:

"Hearts are dust, heart's loves remain;
Hearts love shall meet thee again.'"

My deepest reason for believing in the everlasting life is my belief in the everlasting love. I am sure that the universe is reasonable. All science rests on that assumption. I am equally sure that it would not be reasonable if it was not grounded in love. And love, as the heart of the universe, is what I mean by God. And because I believe in a God of love, I believe in a future in which life can come to completion, and in which the millions to whom life in this world has been but a melancholy failure may come to their own.

All this, as I have said before, is belief; it is not knowledge. I think it is a reasonable belief. It rests on probable evidence of many kinds, it is confirmed by arguments drawn from many lines of reasoning, and tendencies discovered in many fields of experience; the

cumulative force of it when it is all brought together, is to my own mind very strong; yet it is belief and not knowledge. That ought not to discredit it. Most of the great interests of life rest on belief, not on knowledge. Every industrial and commercial enterprise rests on faith, confidence in men, confidence in success. No man knows how his business ventures are coming out, it is by faith alone that he walks in every such enterprise. The statesman never knows how the governmental policies which he urges will work, but he believes in them and confidently advocates them. The pair who stand at the marriage altar plighting their troth do not know that wedlock will bring them happiness, but their faith is strong in each other and in the future. So in all the greatest concerns of life, belief is the basis of our action. Even science rests on a great act of faith, faith in the uniformity of natural law. This is not my word; it is Mr. Huxley's. Listen to the great Agnostic: "The one act of faith in the convert to science is the confession of the universality of order, and in the absolute validity, at all times and under all circumstances, of the law of causation. This confession is an act of faith because, by the nature of the case, the truth of such proposition is not susceptible of proof."

When, therefore, we find that so many of the great interests of the present life rest upon belief, upon probability, the fact that conviction of the reality of the future life has no other basis need not lead us to regard it lightly. All our heaviest investments are made on the basis of probability.

That all life will continue after death may be the

postulate of an ethical system; but there is no clear demand for an indefinite countenance of *all kinds* of existence. The life that is life indeed will go on, but the life that is compounded of perishable elements has no such promise. The Scripture doctrine is that there is a life which is in its own nature indestructible; and that there is a semblance of life which tends toward dissolution and decay. The life of the senses, the life which has its source and spring in things material and perishable, the life that we live in common with the beasts of the field, is not the life everlasting. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and the end of corruption is dissolution; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. The endless continuance of life is, then, a promise, a hope, a glorious possibility; but it is not to any man an inevitable fate. If we want to live forever we must live the kind of life that lasts forever. Such a life there is, the life everlasting. If we believe in it let us choose it and live it, here and now.

I said at the beginning that the present day theology differed somewhat with the traditional theology with reference to the manner in which life is continued after death. The old theology confessed its faith in the resurrection of the body. There is no doubt that this phrase did originally signify — or was generally understood to signify — the resurrection of the identical body laid in the grave. It was supposed that the same particles of matter which compose the body when it is deposited in its last resting place are collected and re-animated in the morning of the resurrection. But, in

the processes of thought this idea has been necessarily abandoned by intelligent persons, and a wholly new conception has been gradually read into this phrase. This new conception is partly the fruit of enlarged scientific knowledge and partly the result of a more careful study of the Scriptures. The one passage in the New Testament which discusses this question most fully is the fifteenth chapter of Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians; and in this he distinctly rejects the idea that the resurrection body will be identical with that which we lay down in the grave. He uses some pretty strong language in reproving the ignorance of those who entertain this notion. The body that we shall inhabit in the next world, he says, is no more identical with the one which we lay down in this, than the plant is identical with the seed. "Thou foolish one!" he cries: "that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die, and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body which shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind, but God giveth it a body even as it pleaseth him, and to each seed a body of its own." "So also is the resurrection of the dead." There could not be a stronger repudiation of the notion that the future tabernacle of the spirit will be composed of the identical particles of matter belonging to that body which we cast off, at the end of our earthly pilgrimage.

We know that the bodies of our dead do literally return to the dust from which they were taken; that they mingle with the earth; the elements composing them are taken up by plants and thus returned again to the

kingdoms of life, entering into grasses and grains and fruits which are the food of man, and thus passing by constant procession back and forth from life to death and from death to life. It is probable that there is not one human body here present which does not contain some elements which have belonged, at some time during the ages past, to other human bodies. It is probable that very few bodies are ever laid in the grave which do not contain some elements which were once before constituent parts of other human bodies, long since laid in the grave. How is it possible, then, that the very particles of matter of which each body is composed when it is laid in the grave shall be collected and re-animated for the use of that particular individual. Many of these same particles of matter have belonged at death to other bodies, which have the same right to claim them. Any Christian student of biology when asked to accept this ancient theory of the resurrection can repeat Paul's "Thou fool!" with increased emphasis.

"Just as our clothes wear out," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "and require darning and patching, so our bodies wear out; the particles are in continual flux, each giving place to others and being constantly discarded and renewed. The identity of the actual or instantaneous body is therefore an affair of no importance; the body which finally dies is no more fully representative of the individual than any of the other bodies which have gradually been discarded *en route*; there is no reason why it should persist any more than they; the individuality, if there is one, must lie deeper than any particular body,

and must belong to whatever it is which put the particles together in this shape and not in another." *

But what, after all, is the body — your body and mine? What is the real essence of this living organism which we call the body? It is not the particles of matter which compose it, for these are constantly changing. The body which you inhabit today is no more composed of the same particles of matter of which it was composed a year ago, than is the Scioto River down at the Broad street Bridge composed today of the same drops of water that composed it a year ago. Constantly, from the air we breathe and the food we eat we are taking new material into our bodies; and as constantly by exhalations and excretions we are casting off old material. The old notion that we have new bodies every seven years is a palpable understatement; the process of change is much more rapid than that.

Nevertheless, we say truly that the bodies which we inhabit today are the same bodies that we lived in a year ago or ten years ago; they certainly possess the same general characteristics, the same height (if we have reached majority) the same features; a substantial identity is maintained in the midst of all this change. What is it that abides through all these mutations? We know but in part, for here is the mystery of life which baffles all the investigations of science. But we do know that some co-ordinating principle, you may call it the principle of life, the vital principle, or what you will, is the constant force by which our bodies are organized and the processes of life are carried on. The

* "Science and Immortality," p. 149.

body is a building, and there is an unseen builder always at work upon it, repairing, renewing, reconstructing, changing it continually in every part, yet building always by the same plan, maintaining the organic identity of the structure from year to year. Now death is the release of this invisible builder, from his task of building with the earthly materials; and the resurrection is the resumption of his work in another sphere of existence, where we may hope that with finer and more plastic substances he will build for the spirit a fairer and more enduring habitation. This organic energy, this coordinating principle of life is the real body; if this survives when the outward form perishes, and lives to rebuild a new tabernacle for the spirit in another world, the Christian hope is realized. There is no room for dogmatic statements about a matter so far removed from human experience, and the hypothesis which I have suggested is only to be used as a possible explanation of the Scripture assurances of life beyond the grave, yet it is probable that some such meaning as this is now given by most intelligent believers to the phrase of the old creed which speaks of the resurrection of the body.

Such a man of science as Sir Oliver Lodge does not find that phrase wholly absurd. "It is founded," he says, "upon the idea of incarnation; and its belief in some sort of bodily resurrection is based on the idea that every real personal existence must have a double aspect, — not spiritual alone nor physical alone, but in some way both. Such an opinion, in a refined form, is common to many systems of philosophy, and is by no means out of harmony with science.

"Christianity, therefore, reasonably supplements the mere survival of a discarnate spirit, a homeless wanderer or melancholy ghost, with the warm and comfortable clothing of something that may legitimately be spoken of as a 'body'; that is to say, it postulates a supersensually appreciable vehicle or mode of manifestation, fitted to subserve the needs of future existence as our bodies subserve the needs of terrestrial life; an etherial or other entity, constituting the persistent 'other aspect,' and fulfilling some of the functions which the atoms of terrestrial matter are constrained to fulfil now. And we may assume, as consonant with or even part of Christianity, the doctrine of the dignity and sacramental character of some physical or quasi-material part of every spiritual essence."*

Literally and chemically construed this old phrase "the resurrection of the body," resolves itself, of course, into absurdity. But the real thought which has been in the minds of believers in all the ages is not absurd; it is full of significance and power. We may sum it up in three propositions.

1. I believe in the continuance of conscious life after death.

2. I believe that this conscious soul will have after death *a form of appearing*,—that it will be personalized, individualized, in such a form of life.

3. I believe that this form of appearing will be the *human form divine*, in its ideal perfection.

The first of these propositions I have already discussed. The second expresses that sense of the sacred-

* Ibid, p. 148.

ness of the individual, the persistence of personality, which distinguishes Christianity from the Pantheistic faiths and especially from Buddhism. It is the Christian faith as contrasted with these other beliefs that Tennyson utters when he says:

“That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet;
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside,
And I shall know him when we meet.”

The third of these propositions merely embodies the feeling that the form which God has given to man in this world, the temple of his body, is, in its perfection, the ideal of physical beauty, and that it will, therefore, be after this type that the house not made with hands will be fashioned in the heavens. Such a belief tends to make sacred and honorable the life which we here live in the flesh, and it gives us a rational foundation for the hope of the recognition of our friends beyond the veil.

Such, then, is the substance of the Christian belief, as now interpreted. I do not think that any of you will pronounce this belief absurd or unworthy; I think that you can all see that it perfectly harmonizes with our noblest conceptions and our purest intuitions; that it not only lights up, with reasonable hopes, the life that is to

come, but that it adds dignity and meaning to the life that now is.

I know full well that these are but hopes; are they therefore valueless? We are saved by hope, Paul says; and there is no other hope that is so full of saving power as this. Really it seems to us, when we confront these great possibilities, that life is worth living. Existence in this world becomes sublime when we think of it as only the prelude of the life everlasting. Struggle, suffering, privation, we may bear with patience, if we believe that they are only the good discipline by which we are trained for nobler service by and by. The sorrows that rend our hearts seem but light afflictions and for a moment, when we realize that they are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And it seems to me that one who will carefully study the laws of growth, by which the individual is carried forward from the first frail beginnings of existence, from one stage to another, old things constantly passing away, and all things becoming new — until he attains the highest perfection of which he is capable here, and then only just begins to reach forth with strongest hope to the things that are before, — that one who studies the life history of any human being “from that first nothing ere his birth” — to the summit of glorious manhood — will feel that this life is but a fragment, that there must be something better, still beyond. In the eloquent words of Sir Edwin Arnold, “What does nature possess more valuable in all she has wrought here, than the wisdom of the sage, the tenderness of the

mother, the devotion of the lover and the opulent imagination of the poet, that she should let these priceless things be utterly lost by a quinsy or a flux? It is a hundred times more reasonable to believe that she commences afresh with such delicately developed treasures, making them the groundwork and stuff for splendid further living by the process of death, which, even when it seems accidental or premature, is probably as natural and gentle as birth; and wherefrom, it may well be, the new-born dead arises to find a fresh world ready for his pleasant and novel body, with gracious and kindred ministration awaiting it, like those which provided for the human babe the guarding arms and nourishing breast of its mother. As the babe's eyes opened to strange sunlight here, so may the eyes of the dead lift glad and surprised lids to 'a light that never was on sea or land,' and so may his delighted ears hear speech and music proper to the spheres beyond, while he laughs contentedly to find how touch and taste and smell had all been forecasts of faculties accurately following on the lowly lessons of this earthly nursery! * * *

These words of Sir Edwin recall to us that saying of Gustave Fechner:

"Man lives on earth not once but three times; the first stage of his life before his birth is continued sleep; the second, sleeping and waking by turns; the third, waking for ever. * * * The act of leaving the first stage for the second we call Birth; that of leaving the second for the third, Death. Our way from the second to the third is not darker than our way from the first

to the second; one way leads us forth to see the world outwardly; the other to see it inwardly." *

O land of rest, of hope, of liberty and peace, where work is without weariness and joy without satiety, where many dear to us who have passed through that second portal are dwelling now, our thoughts fly forward to thy blessed labors and thy dear companionships, and we pray that the life everlasting, into whose unknown felicity thou dost invite us, may so possess our souls and shape our lives even here and now, that we shall pass, when our hour shall come, by gentlest transition, from narrow rooms and broken homes and baffled endeavors here, into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God!

* "Life after Death," pp. 14. 15.

If my People who are called by
my name" Text



Present day theology

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